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Aldous Huxley

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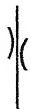
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Life and Letters

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Wars and Emotions

by Aldous Huxley

I

To understand European politics, one should read the history of Central America. This is not paradox, but scientific method. It is by studying the simple that we learn to understand the more complex phenomena of the same kind. The behaviour of children and lunatics throws light on the more complex behaviour of adults and the sane. Pavlov's dogs have explained many hitherto inexplicable characteristics of human beings. Most of the little we know about the anthropology of civilized peoples is the fruit of inquiries into the nature of primitive societies. Central America, being just Europe in miniature and with the lid off, is the ideal laboratory in which to study the behaviour of the Great Powers.

The most striking fact about the

wars of Central America is that none of them has had an origin which could possibly be interpreted as economic. There has never been any question of capturing markets, destroying dangerous competitors, seizing provinces for the sake of their industrially valuable resources. The wars of the Five Republics have been wars between Conservatives and Liberals, between Clericals and Anti-Clericals, between those who desired a single Federal Republic and those who claimed sovereign independence for each state. They have not been wars of interest, but of 'political principle'—in other words, wars of pure passion. Wars are now generally attributed to the machinations of rival groups of capitalists. Owning as they do the instruments of propaganda, they first emotionally involve the dumb de-

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luded public (already prepared by all its education to be involved) in their private quarrels; then, when the emotional temperature is high enough, proceed, in their capacity as rulers, or powers behind thrones, to give the order for mobilization and slaughter.

This description is probably true enough; but it remains a mere description, requiring to be elucidated and explained. We want first of all to know why the exploiters quarrel; and, in the second place, why the exploited allow themselves to be involved.

II

The theorists of the left proclaim it almost as an axiom that, where there is private profit-taking, there of necessity must also be periodical war. But this is clearly untrue. If capitalists were interested only in the efficient exploitation of their victims (as would to heaven they had had the sense to be!) they would not waste their resources in fighting one another; they would combine to work out the most efficient scheme for squeezing profits out of the entire planet. That they do not do so – or do so only spasmodically and inadequately – is due to the fact that the exploiters are as much the slaves of the passions aroused by nationalism as the exploited. They own and use the instruments of propaganda, but are themselves the first to believe in, and to act upon, the nonsense they broadcast. These Machiavels are incapable of seeing their own best economic advantage. Peace, it is obvious, and international-

ism pay; war on its present scale must, in the long run, inevitably harm the capitalists who bring it about. Nevertheless, they *do* bring it about – and believe, under the patriotic cant, that they are bringing it about in their own interests. They make war in order to increase the profits they derive from their particular system of nationalist economy at the expense of the profits derived by fellow capitalists from rival systems. (Nationalism is against the higher economic interests of the exploiters; but it creates certain particular interests of monopoly which to some extent justify the capitalists in their appeal to arms on business grounds.)

They also make and threaten war on the Machiavellian principle that foreign dangers give the ruler an opportunity for strengthening his position at home. It is for this reason that all the post-war dictators have been scare-mongers and sabre-rattlers. The fear of each people for its neighbours confirms the power of the rulers who happen to be in office. But what is this power compared with the power that would be wielded by an oligarchy of world-rulers? And compared with the profits to be derived from a world-system of economy, how poor are the profits earned under a mere nationalist system! Moreover, modern war is demonstrably ruinous to economic activity and disruptive of social order. So far from enriching and strengthening himself by war on the present scale, the capitalist ruler is likely to lose in the convulsion most of such money and power as he possesses. In spite of which, our rulers insist that

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the political and economic system shall remain (to their own manifest disadvantage) nationalistic. Safe and profitable, internationalism is rejected. Why? Because all capitalist-rulers are bound by a theology of passion that prevents them from rationally calculating their profits and losses. And so long as such a theology continues to be accepted by rulers, it makes no difference whether these are private profit-makers or bureaucrats representing 'the People'. The development of nationalistic state-socialism is not only possible; at the present moment, it actually seems a probability.

The truth is that our so-called wars of interest are really wars of passion, like those of Central America. To find a war of pure interest one must go far afield. The Opium War between England and China was one of the very few whose causes were purely and unadulteratedly economic. 'All for Hate', is the title of every great international tragedy of modern times, or 'the World Well Lost'.

'Les intérêts', writes the French philosopher, Alain, 'transigent toujours, les passions ne transigent jamais.' Interests are always ready to compound, passions never. You can always discuss figures, haggle over prices, ask a hundred and accept eighty-five. But you cannot discuss hatred, nor haggle over contradictory vanities and prejudices, nor ask for blood and accept a soft answer. Neither can you argue away the immediately experienced fact that boasting is delightful, that it is bliss to feel yourself superior to the other fellow,

that 'righteous indignation' is wildly intoxicating, and that the thrill of being one of a mob that hates another mob can be as pleasurable exciting as a prolonged orgasm. The exploited who succumb to the nationalist propaganda of the exploiters are having the time of their lives. We have asked what they get out of being involved in their masters' quarrels. In the early stages of being involved they get the equivalent of free seats at a magnificent entertainment, combining a revival meeting with championship boxing and a pornographic cinema show. At the call of King and Country, they spring to arms. Can we be surprised?

La guerre naît des passions. But before we begin to elaborate this proposition, we must ask ourselves the very pertinent question: whose passions? The passions of the people as a whole? Or only of the rulers? *Of both*, I believe is the correct answer. It is the rulers, of course, who actually declare war; and they do so, first, because they are moved by passions that the theology of nationalism has taught them to regard as creditable; and, second, because they wish to defend interests which nationalism has either really created or which they themselves have invented to serve as a rational justification for their passions. But rulers cannot carry on a war unless the ruled are moved by the same passions or the same rationalizations of passions as themselves. Before war can be waged, the mass of the people must be made to imagine that they want the war; that the war is in their interests or at least unavoidable. This end is

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accomplished by a violent campaign of propaganda, launched at the time of the declaration of war. But such a campaign would not be effective, if the people had not from earliest childhood been indoctrinated with the nationalist theology. Owing to this nationalistic conditioning of all their worst passions, the ruled are sometimes actually more war-like than their rulers, who find themselves reluctantly propelled towards a war which they would like to avoid. At other times, the ruled are less the slaves of nationalist passion and prejudice than the rulers. Thus, I think it would be true to say that, at present, the majority of French and English people are more pacific, less dangerously obsessed by the Moloch-theology of nationalism, readier to think of international politics in terms of reason, than are their governments.

III

In the notes which follow, I shall discuss the war-producing passions in themselves, without specific references to those who feel them. In practice, it is obvious, everything depends on the rulers. They can either encourage and systematize the expression of these passions; or alternatively they can prevent the theology of nationalism from being taught in the schools or propagated by other means. Rulers who wished to do so could rid the world of its collective insanity within a generation. Revolution by persuasion can be nearly as swift and 'catastrophic' as revolution by violence, and, if carried out scientifi-

cally, promises to be incomparably more effective. The Jesuits and the Assassins have demonstrated what can be done by intelligent conditioning of the young. It is disastrous that the only people who have thoroughly learnt the lessons of Loyola and the Old Man of the Mountain should be the exponents of militant nationalism in Germany and Italy and the exponents of militant collectivism in Russia. War is the common denominator of all the existing systems of scientific conditioning.

So much for the people who feel the passions. Now for the passions themselves – hatred, vanity and the nameless urge which men satisfy in the act of associating with other men in large unanimous droves.

It is reported of Alain that when, in the trenches, his fellow soldiers complained of the miseries of war, he would answer: 'Mais vous avez eu assez de plaisir; vous avez crié Vive l'Armée ou Vive l'Alsace Lorraine. Il faut que cela se paye. Il faut mourir.'

Hate is like lust in its irresistible urgency; it is, however, more dangerous than lust, because it is a passion less closely dependent on the body. The emission of a glandular secretion suffices to put an end to lust, at any rate for a time. But hate is a spiritual passion, which no mere physiological process can assuage. Hate, therefore, has what lust entirely lacks – persistence and continuity: the persistence and continuity of purposive spirit. Moreover, lust is 'perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame', only before action; hate, both before and during

Aldous Huxley

action. In the case of lust, the time of action is limited to a few minutes or seconds, and with the ending of the action coincides the temporary or permanent ending of that particular passion of lust. Very different is the case of hatred. Its action may continue for years; nor does the ending of any particular phase of the action necessarily entail the ending of the emotional state which was its justification.

Hate, is not, of course, the only passion behind the theory and practice of nationalism. Vanity – the collective vanity manifested by each individual member of a group which he regards as superior to other groups and whose superiority he feels in himself – vanity is equally important; and both these passions are combined with, and derive an added strength from, that lust for sociability, whose indulgence yields such enormous psychological dividends to the individual of a gregarious species. At ordinary times, indeed, vanity seems to be more important than hate. But it must not be forgotten that hate is always accompanied by persecution mania. The paeans of self-praise with which the nationalists are perpetually gratifying themselves are always on the point of modulating into denunciations of other people. Hatred, even when not actually expressed, is always there just below the surface. One is therefore justified in speaking of this passion as fundamental in the contemporary theory and practice of nationalism.

So far as the physiology and psychology of individual human beings is

concerned, there is nothing to prevent the pleasures of hatred from being as deliciously enduring as the pleasures of love in the Muslim paradise. Fortunately, however, hatred in action tends to be self-destructive. The intoxicating delight of being many thousands bawling, '*Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles,*' or '*Marchons, marchons qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons,*' is apt to be brought speedily to a close. Bawling in mobs is almost as good as copulation; but the subsequent action generally leads to discomfort, extreme pain and death all round. *Il faut que cela se paye*, and the payment entails the transformation of hatred from a source of pleasure to a source of misery and, in many cases the transformation of the hater himself into a corpse. This, I repeat, is fortunate; for if the gratification of hatred were always as delicious as it is sometimes, then there would obviously never be any intervals of peace. As it is the world seems *well* lost only so long as the action dictated by hatred remains successful. When it ceases to be successful, the loss of the world is realized and regretted, and the haters become homesick once more for a quiet life on friendly terms with their neighbours. But once a war has been started, they are not allowed, and do not even allow themselves, to succumb to this natural homesickness. Nationalism is a set of passions rationalized in terms of a theology. When, in the natural course of events, the passions tend to lose their intensity, they can be revived artificially by an appeal to the theology. Moreover 'tasks in hours of insight – or

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orgasm – willed can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.’ A theology, with its accompanying principles and categorical imperatives, is a mechanism for making it possible to do in cold blood the things which, if nature were left to itself, it would be possible to do only in hot blood.

The commonest, one might call it the natural, rhythm of human life is routine punctuated by orgies. Routine supports men’s weakness, makes the fatigue of thought unnecessary and relieves them of the intolerable burden of responsibility. Orgies, whether sexual, religious, sporting or political, provide that periodical excitement which all of us crave and which most of us are too insensitive to feel except under the most crudely violent stimulation. Hence (beside all the private and domestic orgies) such public stimulations as gladiatorial games, bull fights, boxing matches, gambling; hence patriotic demonstrations, hymns of hate, mass meetings and parades; hence saturnalia, carnivals, firsts of May, fourths and fourteenth of July; hence religious revivals, pilgrimages, miraculous grottoes and all the techniques for arousing what Professor Otto has called the ‘numinous’ emotions. Sensitive and civilized men can dispense with these crude, almost surgical, methods of producing excitement. But sensitive and civilized men are rare – as rare as the American who, after ten years of prohibition, can enjoy a glass of good wine. The vast majority can only get

their kick out of the equivalent of proof spirit.

Consider in this context the adaptation to popular needs of the religion of Jesus. For Professor Otto, the essence of religion is the ‘numinous’ emotion in all its forms, from panic terror up to a rapturous awareness of the *mysterium tremendum fascinans* of the world. And so far as the religion of the ordinary, insensitive but excitement-loving person is concerned, this is probably true. Jesus, however, lays no stress on such emotions, nor prescribes any technique for arousing them. For him, it is clear, the surgical stimulation of deliberately induced ecstasy, of luscious ritual and corybantic revivalism were all entirely unnecessary. They were not unnecessary for his followers. These, in the course of a few hundred years, made Christianity almost as sensational and orgiastic as Hinduism. If they had not, there would have been no Christians.

The bearing of these facts on Central America, wars and international disputes in general, is obvious. Nationalistic theology is not only a substitute for passion; it is also an excuse for it. It justifies these periodical orgies of emotion which are, for the great majority of men and women, a psychological necessity. So long as these orgies remain platonic, no harm is done. They are a bit undignified, that is all. But if people need to get drunk, if they cannot preserve their soul’s health without occasional orgasms of hatred, self-love and group-frenzy, why, then, drunk they must get and orgasms they

Aldous Huxley

IV

must have. The trouble is that the greatest *immediate* happiness of the greatest number too often leads to the greatest *ultimate* unhappiness. The orgies of nationalism are not platonic orgies-for-orgies'-sake. They lead to practical results – to the piling up of armaments, to senseless economic competition, to embargoes on foreign goods and ultimately to war. *Il faut que cela se paye*. The fundamental problem of international politics is psychological. The economic problems are secondary and, but for the psychological problems would not exist. The good intentions of such statesmen as desire peace – and many of them do not even desire it – are rendered ineffective by their consistent refusal to deal with the war-disease at its source. To attempt to cure symptoms, such as tariff-wars and armaments, without at the same time attacking the psychological causes of these symptoms, is a proceeding foredoomed to failure. What is the use of a Disarmament or a World Economic Conference so long as the people of each nation are deliberately encouraged by their leaders to indulge in orgies of group-solidarity based on, and combined with, self-congratulation and contemptuous hatred for foreigners? Our need is rather for a World Psychological Conference, at which propaganda experts should decide upon the emotional cultures to be permitted and encouraged in each state and the appropriate mythologies and philosophies to accompany these emotional cultures.

Before we enter into the possible activities of such a conference it is necessary to consider the psycho-analytic theory of international relations set forth in Dr. F. Vergin's book, 'Sub-Conscious Europe'. Dr. Vergin's contention is that war is an escape from the restraints of civilization. 'It is quite useless to demand higher standards of Christian morality and at the same time to preach peace.' Ethical restraints exact their own revenge. It is no coincidence that, in France, the parties most closely associated with Catholicism should be the most violently chauvinistic. All European parties with a Christian orientation are fundamentally war-like, because the psychological pressure of Christian restraint necessarily urges them on to find emotional relief in hatred. Such, in brief, is Dr. Vergin's theory. It has the merit of being simple and the defect of being perhaps a bit too simple. Ours is not the only civilization that has imposed restraints on the appetites of the individual. Every civilization imposes restraints; otherwise it would not exist. Again, not all restraints are felt to be restraints: people can be so conditioned as to accept certain artificial restraints as though they were part of the order of nature. The restraints which hedge in the individuals of a primitive society are more numerous and less escapable than those by which we are surrounded. In spite of which many primitive and semi-primitive societies have been on the whole remark-

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ably peaceable. For example, Mexico and Central America before their separation from Spain had enjoyed two centuries and a half of almost uninterrupted peace. And yet the population of these provinces laboured under restraints of all kinds – political restraints imposed from without, and psychological restraints imposed from within, as the result of stringent religious conditioning. According to Dr. Vergin's argument, the psychological pressure generated by such restraints should have driven the people into civil war. It did nothing of the kind, and for several good reasons. In the first place, all members of Spanish colonial society were brought up in an emotional culture that made them regard submission to King and church, and reasonably decent behaviour towards their fellow-subjects as unquestionably right and 'natural'. In the second place, their life was so arranged that they could get all the orgiastic excitements – religious ceremonies, dances, sports, public executions and private wife-beatings – for which they periodically craved. This being so, they had no urgent psychological need for the orgies of militant nationalism. The dangerous psychological pressure, described by Dr. Vergin, is worked up only among puritans who disapprove and suppress all exciting and pleasurable activities whatsoever. 'Righteous indignation' is the only emotional orgasm these people allow themselves; they therefore live in a chronic state of hatred, disapproval and uncharitableness. The rulers of Central America

were not puritans and, while imposing socially valuable restraints upon their subjects, allowed them by way of compensation a plentiful choice of more or less harmless amusements. Furthermore, if any of them wanted to enjoy the pleasures of public hatred there was always Sir Francis Drake and Morgan and Dampier; there were always, besides the buccaneers and pirates, all the home-country's official enemies; there were always heretics, protestants, foreigners and heathens. Objects of collective detestation in rich variety – and most of them, very fortunately, a long way off, so that it was possible, the greater part of the time, to enjoy the pleasures of nationalism platonically, without having to suffer the smallest inconvenience.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century this vast and for long generations peaceable Spanish colony transformed itself into six independent states, each in an almost chronic condition of civil war and each disliking all the rest so intensely that the civil war from time to time gave place to savage outbursts of fighting between state and state. The reasons for this strange and distressing metamorphosis are such as to deserve the most careful consideration by the delegates to our hypothetical World Psychological Conference.

From the very beginning, there had always been the best possible economic reasons why the Indians, the *mestizos* and the American-born white creoles should wish to revolt against the dominion of Spain. In varying degrees all were exploited by the distant

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government and, still more, by its lawless representatives on the spot. During the later seventeenth hundreds, as a result of Galvez's reforms, the economic condition of the country and its native born inhabitants seems to have improved; it is probably true to say that, at the turn of the new century, there were actually fewer economic reasons for revolt than there ever had been in the history of the colonies. These fewer reasons were still, of course, many and enormous. But they would not in themselves have been enough to initiate a war of independence. The victims of oppression had been so thoroughly conditioned to accept the existing situation that they found the idea of revolt unthinkable. It became thinkable only when Napoleon deposed the legitimate king of Spain and usurped the throne for Joseph Bonaparte. Spanish-American loyalty had been, till then, astonishingly solid – a great arch, as it were, flung, in apparent defiance of all the laws of political physics, across a gulf of bottomless incompetence and iniquity. The millions of its component stones, all centred upon, and were held together, by the keystone of the legitimate king's divine right to rule; and the art of the psychological engineers who raised it – the priests and the Spanish administrators – had consisted in suggesting the people into the conviction that this divine right was not only their keystone, but their rock of ages as well, and that without its presence, there, at the crown and centre of everything, they would be

lost, non-existent, eternally damned. Napoleon brutally removed the possessor of the divine right to rule the Spanish empire. Deprived of its keystone, the arch disintegrated. The first symptom of disintegration was the Indian revolt in Mexico headed by Hidalgo. This was an orthodox economic revolution of oppressed serfs – but an economic revolution made possible only by the removal of divine authority, personified by Charles IV. Goya's old figure of fun was God's representative, and his deposition meant that, from being almost or completely unthinkable, revolution suddenly became not only thinkable but actable.

The most curious fact in the history of the Mexican and Central American revolt against Spain is that independence was actually proclaimed by the Conservatives and Catholics. More royalist than the king, they were afraid of what would happen to them if they remained connected with the liberal, constitutional Spain of 1820. To preserve their loyalty to a non-existent king-by-divine-right, they rebelled against the actual king, who at that moment, had been forced to become a constitutional monarch.

So much for the revolt from Spain. The subsequent history of the ex-Colonials is the history of men with a traditional culture of the emotions suitable to one kind of political regime, trying to establish another regime borrowed from abroad, and failing, because the new system could not be worked except by people brought up in an entirely different emotional

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culture. The whites, near-whites and *mestizos*, who constituted the only politically conscious and politically active element in the population, had been brought up to accept the divine right of the king to rule them. At the same time they preserved the anarchic tradition of the Renaissance, regarding themselves as individuals, each having the right to do as well as he could for himself. Accordingly, we find reverence for the throne accompanied by evasion of its commands. The people were simultaneously convinced that the king had a divine right to make the laws and that they, as individuals, had a divine right to disobey them whenever they could do so advantageously and without being found out. After the Bonapartist usurpation of 1808, the idea began to dawn upon them that they themselves might make the laws; which, in due course, after the declaration of independence, they proceeded to do. But unfortunately they had carried over from the *ancien régime* the idea that each man had also an inalienable right to break the laws. Such an idea was not too harmful under a monarchy, which provided a certain stability and continuity of rule. But it was fatal under a republic. Democratic institutions can only work where individuals have been conditioned to show public spirit and a sense of responsibility. The correct emotional culture for self-governing people is one that produces a feeling for honour and 'sportsmanship'. Battles may still be won on the playing fields of Eton; but, what is perhaps more creditable to

those elm-shadowed expanses of soggy turf, colonial empires are humanely lost there. That capacity to see the other fellow's point of view, that reluctance to exploit to the full his chronic weakness or momentary disadvantage, that scrupulosity which Tennyson was already denouncing as 'the craven fear of being great' and which (in spite of numerous individual and official backslidings) has come more and more to be characteristic of the national policy towards subject races, are all the products of these playing fields. Cricket and football prepared our administrators for the task of humanely ruling and for the more recent task of not ruling, and scepticism has finished off the job which games began. Of the newly invented Maxim gun, H. M. Stanley, the explorer, remarked 'it is a fine weapon, and will be invaluable for subduing the heathen'. Nobody could utter such words now, because nobody has the kind of faith professed by Stanley. Given the means of action, all strong faith must inevitably result in persecution and attempts at the domination of others. Scepticism makes for tolerance and peaceable behaviour. All Central Americans were brought up as unsporting believers. Hence, with the disappearance of monarchy, the chronic misgovernment of every Central American state.

The newly fashionable idea of nationalism was imported along with the idea of self-government. Applying the logic of this philosophy of hatred and division to their own immediate problems, the people of Central America

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tried to make each administrative district into an independent country. There were moments when single departments of provinces (such as the department of Quezaltenango in Guatemala) declared their independence. But such extravagances of folly were not permitted by the other departments, whose representatives insisted on the new countries being at least as large as the old colonial provinces. These, heaven knows, were small enough. The introduction of the nationalistic idea into Central America resulted in the dismemberment of a society which had hitherto been unquestionably one. Fellow subjects of the same king, speaking the same language, professing the same religion and having every possible economic reason for remaining united, the Mexicans and Central Americans were constrained by the emotional logic of an imported theology of hatred to renounce all their ties of blood and culture. Almost from one day to another this hitherto united society divided itself into six arbitrary groups of artificial enemies.

All enemies, except those fighting for the strictly limited food supply of a given territory, may be described as artificial enemies. But there are degrees of artificiality. The artificiality of the enmity between the Central Americans is of the highest order. Nationalism is the justificatory philosophy of unnecessary and artificial hatred. Under its influence, and in the absence of natural enemies, men will go out of their way to create artificial ones, so as to have objects on which to vent their hatred.

Similarly, in the absence of women or of a subjective taste for women, men will imaginatively transform other men into artificial women, so as to have objects on which to vent their lusts. Like collective hatred, homosexuality has its justifying theology, adumbrated by Plato and in recent years systematically worked out by M. André Gide. This author has done for the love of artificial women what Maurice Barrès did for the hatred of artificial enemies – moralized its pleasure and endowed them with a cosmic significance.

All enjoy the warmth that accompanies boasting, the fierce electric thrill of hatred. Some take pleasure in the act of fighting. But none enjoy (though it is extraordinary how many are ready stoically to bear) starvation, wounds and violent death. That the Central Americans have derived intense satisfaction from the act of hating their new, artificial enemies is certain. But these moments of fun have been paid for by other moments of misery and pain. Would it not have been possible, the observer will ask, to invent a political system which would have given them all the emotional orgasms they needed at a smaller material and spiritual cost?

V

With this question upon our lips, we may now return to our hypothetical World Psychological Conference and, guided by the light which Central America has thrown on the problems of international relations, may profit-

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ably begin to inquire into the nature of its discussions.

The end proposed by our conference is international peace. The obstacle which it has to circumvent is nationalism. The material with which it has to deal is the psychology of very suggestible, rather insensitive, but emotional and excitement-loving people assembled in vast urban communities. The problem is to devise means for so treating this material that the obstacle may be avoided and the goal definitely reached.

The first thing our delegates would remark is that all governments deplore and carefully regulate the manifestations of lust, but deliberately encourage those of collective vanity and hatred. To boast mendaciously about one's own gang and to slander and defame other gangs are acts everywhere officially regarded as creditable and even pious. It is as though our rulers, instead of merely tolerating prostitution, were to proclaim the brothel to be a place as sacred as the cathedral and as improving as the public library. Doctrines like that of race superiority are the spiritual equivalent of cantharides. Under the Nazis, for example, every German is made to take his daily dose of what I may call Nordic fly. The Marquis de Sade was condemned to a long term of imprisonment for having distributed aphrodisiac candies to a few prostitutes in Marseilles. But nationalists who devise means for arousing in millions the disgraceful passions of hatred, envy and vanity are hailed as the saviours of their country.

One of the preliminary conditions of international peace is the inculcation of a new (or rather of a very old) scale of moral values. People must be taught to think hatred at least as discreditable as they now think lust; to find the more raucous manifestations of collective vanity as vulgar, low and ludicrous as those of individual vanity.

Nationalists and militarists have tried to defend their position on ethical as well as on political grounds. War and nationalism are good, they say, because they stimulate individuals to display the more heroic virtues. But the same argument could be brought forward in favour of prostitution. There is a whole literature describing the devotion and tenderness, the benevolence and, positively, the saintliness of whores. But nobody regards this literature as justifying the wholesale encouragement of whoredom. Man's is a double nature and there is hardly any critical situation in which he will not display, simultaneously or alternately, the most repulsive characteristics of an animal and a heroism equal to that of the martyrs. Nationalism and war stimulate men to heroism, but also to bestiality. So far as individuals are concerned, the bad cancels out the good. And so far as society is concerned the bad – that is to say the harmful – enormously predominates. War and nationalism are without any possible justification.

But ethical justifications are not what our hypothetical delegates have come together to discuss. They have come together to discuss the psycho-

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logical conditions for international peace. Ethical justifications are mainly useful after the fact – to confirm individuals in certain types of socially useful behaviour.

I will assume – what, alas, is sadly improbable – that our delegates have agreed in principle on the need for all governments to discourage the manifestations by their subjects of collective hatred and hatred-producing vanity. Having done this, they find themselves immediately faced by the problem of Prohibition. The prohibition of any activity that gives people great psychological satisfactions is very difficult to carry out and, if carried out, may lead to all kinds of unexpected and distressing consequences. Zeal to convert and civilize the Melanesians is leading to their extinction; deprived of all that, for them, made life worth living, they simply cease to live. The effort to make Americans more sober resulted in an increase of alcoholism and criminality. Puritanism carried to its logical conclusions notoriously leads to sadism. And so on; the dangers of untempered prohibition are everywhere apparent. Many activities are psychologically satisfying, but socially harmful. Suppression of these should always be accompanied by the offer of an alternative activity, as rewarding to the individuals engaged in it, but socially harmless or, if possible, beneficial. This is the principle behind all enlightened colonial administration at the present time. Thus, the head hunters in New Guinea have been persuaded to use for all ritual purposes

the heads not of human beings, but of wild boars; this modification accepted, they are at liberty to perform all the elaborate and psychologically rewarding ceremonies prescribed by their religion. Psychologically, the abolition of militant nationalism in Europe is the equivalent of the abolition of head-hunting in Papua. Our imaginary delegates are depriving the people of a great many opportunities for emotional excitement. What alternatives do they propose to supply? This is a difficult problem, completely soluble, I imagine, only by an experimental process of trial, error and re-trial. 'Hate,' as Dr. Vergin has justly remarked, 'pays a higher psychological dividend than can be obtained from international amity, sympathy and co-operation.' Benevolence is tepid; hatred and its complement, vanity, are stinging hot and high-flavoured. That is why National Socialism is so much easier to popularize than the League of Nations. It will be the task of the psychological engineers to see how far co-operation can be combined with socially harmless, but psychologically rewarding, competitions and rivalry. Rivalry, for example, in industry (the Russians have exploited this kind of friendly competition in the attempt to get more work out of their factory hands). Rivalry in sports. Rivalry – but this, alas, would probably arouse not the smallest popular enthusiasm – in scientific and artistic achievement. The substitutes for militant nationalism may be almost as exciting as the things they replace. Thus, at Constantinople, feel-

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ing at the chariot races ran so high that lose unquestioning faith in the local

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a world-view which shall be as acceptable to the New Stupid as nationalism and as beneficial as the best of the transcendental religions.

To the two questions in the second group no definite answer can be given, except on the basis of a specific research. The balance sheet of psychological equivalents has yet to be drawn up; nevertheless a rather vague, but useful, generalization is possible. Rulers can impose many prohibitions, provided that the people on whom they are imposed have been given sufficiently lively and interesting orgies. The problem, obviously, is to define 'sufficiently'. But there is no one definition; for what is sufficient for people in one set of circumstances is insufficient for people in another. Thus, the orgy-system of the Central Americans, simple and unpretentious as it was, seems to have been quite sufficient for their needs. The fact that they bore, almost without complaint, the enormous oppression of their rulers, is evidence that, psychologically, they were satisfied. To-day we have a choice of diversions incomparably wider than theirs. Nevertheless our elaborate orgy-system is probably insufficient for our needs. Living as we do in an age of technological progress, and therefore of incessant change, we find that we cannot be amused except by novelties. The traditional orgies which, without undergoing the smallest modification, refreshed our ancestors during long centuries of history, now seem to us intolerably insipid. Nothing can be new enough for us. Even the most exciting

and elaborate of our amusements cannot satisfy for long.

Nor is this the only reason for the insufficiency of our orgy system. The processions, dances, and even the sports of the Central Americans were related to their mythology. It was to do honour to St. Joseph that one marched round the town with candles and a drum; one fought cocks or baited bulls to celebrate the Assumption of the Mother of God; one danced for St. Francis or, on the sly, for the Feathered Serpent of the old dispensation. One did magic in the name of St. Peter and got drunk because it was All Souls' Day. What was and still is true of Central America used to be true, until quite recent times, of Europe. To-day all diversions have been laicized. This has happened partly as a result of the positivistic tendencies of the New Stupidity; partly owing to the fact that all entertainments are in the hands of joint stock companies, whose interest it is that people shall amuse themselves, not only on mythologically significant occasions, but every day and all the time. The result is that 'our laughter and our tears mean but themselves', and meaning but themselves, mean curiously little. Hence the prodigious success of the entertainments organized by up-to-date mob-leaders in the name of nationalism. Mussolini and Hitler have restored to the New Stupid some of the substantial pleasure enjoyed by the Old Stupidity. Can these pleasures be restored in some other and less pernicious name than that of collective hatred and vanity?

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We have seen that people will put up with all kinds of prohibitions, provided that they are given psychologically 'sufficient' compensations. Granted qualitative sufficiency, what is the amount of emotional stimulation necessary for health? How many orgies – or rather, since it is the minimum that interests us, how few – do human beings require? Only prolonged field-work would permit one to return a scientifically accurate answer. At present, all one can say is that the appetite for emotional stimulation varies greatly from individual to individual and that populations at large seem to be able now to support very large doses of emotional excitement, now to content themselves with very small doses.

Some people have a very powerful appetite for emotional excitement – or else, which is perhaps the same thing, are cursed with an insensitiveness that only surgical methods can awake to feeling. These, in a peaceable society, are apt to be a nuisance. In the past, some of them could be counted on to destroy themselves by crusading, duelling, piracy and more recently by exploring and colonial adventuring. Unhappily, the last of these overseas outlets for violence are being closed – in some cases have been closed already. Germany, for example, has no colonies as a safety-valve for her more ferocious young men. Perhaps that is why Hitler found such a rich supply of them in the streets of Munich and Berlin. The Jews and the Communists are paying for the annexation of Tanganyika and German South West Africa. For

the Nazi gunmen they provide, so to speak, a Colony in Every Home. Among the Indians of Central America, a good deal of what would otherwise have been dangerous political violence was probably absorbed in the domestic circle; wives, children and village delinquents were the 'Jews', the 'Reds', the 'Coloured Races', on whom they vented their native brutality and wreaked vengeance for the wrongs done them by their conquerors. With us, wives and children are pretty effectively protected by the law; that immemorial safety-valve is tightly screwed down. Moreover, darkest Africa is rapidly ceasing to be dark, and its inhabitants are beginning to be treated almost as though they were human beings – or, better, almost as though they were Our Dumb Friends. Soon the violent individuals of even the imperialistic nations will have to look elsewhere for their dangerous adventures and, lacking real Hottentots to bully, will be forced to transform the more helpless of their unpopular neighbours into artificial Hottentots (In this context, it is not the colour of a posterior that counts; it is its kickableness). One of the minor tasks of our Conference will be to provide born adventurers and natural slave-drivers with harmless and unharmable blackamoor-*ersatzes*, with safe, humane but satisfying Putumayo-surrogates.

That communities have flourished for centuries without the stimuli of militant nationalism is certain. But the trouble is that such peaceable societies (of whom the Old Empire Mayas seem

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to have been one) lived in circumstances very different from those of to-day and were composed of individuals, in whom consciousness had developed along other lines than those by which the modern European mind has advanced. So far as we are concerned, they are Utopias, admirable but fundamentally irrelevant. My own conviction is that, in this matter of emotional stimulation, quantity is strictly a function of quality. If routine is easy, comfortable and secure, and if all the organized emotional stimulations are qualitatively satisfying, then the number and variety of orgies can safely be reduced. Nationalism flourishes among the New Stupid of our contemporary world for two reasons: first, because the common orgies of daily life are of such poor quality; and, second, because the routine, which is the complement and necessary background of such orgies, has been disturbed.

This disturbance is due in large measure to the practical application of nationalism to politics and results in a state of mind that welcomes nationalism for the sake of the exciting distractions it creates and theoretically justifies. The movement is, as usual, circular and vicious. Routine and orgies. Or, as the Romans preferred to put it, bread and circuses. Still, as always, the universal demand. Men cannot live by bread alone. But neither can they live only by circuses. To some extent, however, a shortage of bread can be made up for by a surfeit of circuses. All the mob-leaders of the post-war years have pursued the same

policy: they have organized political circuses in order to distract people's attention from their hunger and the prevailing social uncertainty. Unable to fill empty bellies with bread, they aim instead at filling empty heads with flags and verbiage and brass bands and collective hysteria. The Nazis are preparing, as I write, to hold a hundred and fifty thousand political meetings in two months. We may parody the words of the old song and ask:

Will the hate that you're so rich in
Light a fire in the kitchen,
And the little god of hate turn the
spit, spit, spit?

Alas, he won't; and one day the public for whom these political circuses are so lavishly organized will grasp the distressing truth and say, with Queen Victoria, 'We are not amused'.

VII

This brings us to a very interesting point. The amount of emotional stimulation which a given society can tolerate, varies within very wide limits. There are times when the whole, or at any rate a large part of the community will tolerate violent emotional stimulations and even deliberately seek them out. Under the influence of this excitement, difficult tasks will be accomplished and heroic acts performed. But after a certain time fatigue seems to set in: people cease to be moved by the old stimuli, cease even to wish to live heroically; their highest ambition is a quiet life well supplied with the

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creature comforts. This fatigue, it should be noticed, need not be experienced by the same people as originally cultivated the fatiguing emotions. One generation lives an intense emotional life and the next generation is tired. The community behaves as though it were a living organism, in which individuals play the part of cells. It is the organism as a whole that feels fatigue; and this fatigue communicates itself to the new cells which, in the natural course of growth, replace those originally stimulated. 'The fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge.' What is the mechanism of this curious process? There is no reason to suppose that it is physiological. The children are not born tired; they become tired by psychological reaction to their parents' enthusiasm. But why do they react? Why are they not conditioned to share the enthusiasm? And why is it that when enthusiasms are not too violent there is no reaction, but acceptance on the part of the children?

To answer these questions with any precision one would have to undertake a campaign of intensive field-work and specially directed historical research. Lacking precise data, one can risk a vague generalization and say that it is impossible so to condition people that they will permanently accept a state of things that imposes an unbearable strain on their psychology; and that where such an attempt is made, the reaction to conditioning will ultimately be negative, not positive. The image of the social organism once more im-

poses itself: the community is a creature that can survive only when its constituent parts are in a state of equilibrium. Excessive stimulation has to be compensated by repose. The stimulated cells are one set of individuals; the reposing cells, another. Why and how do the individuals of the second generation realize that a negative reaction to parental conditioning is, socially speaking, necessary? It is impossible to guess. But the fact remains that they apparently do realize it.

Periods of intense general excitement never last very long. The social organism does not seem to be able to tolerate more than about twenty years of abnormal agitation. Thus, the thrilling, heroic period of the religious revival, set going by St. Francis of Assisi, was over in less than a quarter of a century. The great animal that was Europe could not stand the strain of sitting up on its hind legs and performing primitive-Christian tricks. Within a generation it had settled down once more to a comfortable doze. Every violently exciting religious or political movement of history has run much the same course. It will be interesting to see whether the revivalist enthusiasm worked up by Communists, Nazis and Fascists will last longer than the similar mass emotion aroused by the first Franciscans. True, the technique of propaganda is much more efficient now than it was in the Middle Ages. St. Francis had no printing press, no radio, no cinema, no loud-speakers. Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini have them by the thousand. Nevertheless, it may

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be doubted whether they will really do better than St. Francis. An orchestra can make louder music than a single fiddle. But if you are tired, and bored with dancing, the orchestra will not set you capering more effectively than the fiddle. On the contrary, the very insistence of its appeal will anger you into an obstinate refusal to make the smallest answering gesture

It should be the policy of every ruler not to allow the emotions of his subjects to be for any length of time systematically over-stimulated. Nor, if he is wise, will he ever make use of emotional over-stimulation to carry out any ambitious, long-range plan of his own. The finally negative reaction of the social organism to such over-stimulation is likely to stultify the plan and may lead at the same time to a temporary lowering of the vitality of the whole community, most undesirable and, in certain circumstances, even dangerous. The aim of the ruler should be to discover exactly the right dose of bread and circuses and to administer just that, no more and no less. Where the dosage is correct, as it evidently was in Egypt, in Babylonia, in India, in China, a society can remain for centuries astonishingly stable, even under the stress of attack and actual conquest by alien peoples.

Ours is a world of rapidly changing techniques; education has tinged our congenital stupidity with positivism and we are therefore impatient of faith in any kind of invisible transcendental entity. In such a world and for such a people what is the perfect dose of

bread and circuses? It is hard indeed to say. But though perfection may be unattainable, it should be fairly easy to improve on the wildly incorrect and dangerous practice of the present time. The formula for permanent health is doubtless beyond us; but at least the temporary avoidance of sudden death is within our power.

VIII

We come now to the last of our questions. Can hate be used for producing unification? Or, rather, can unification be produced without using hatred. Carrera, the Indian chieftain, who ruled Guatemala from 1840 to 1860, made his first entry into the capital under a banner inscribed with these words: *Viva la religion y muerte a los extranjeros*. Uneducated, he knew by mother wit that the two most effective instruments for uniting men are a shared mythology and a shared hatred

Carrera did not aim very high; he wanted, first of all, to unify the army of savage Indians under his command and later, when he had achieved dictatorial power, to consolidate Guatemala into a sovereign state. His enemies, the Liberals of Salvador, were more ambitious. They aspired to unite all of Central America into a single federated republic. A more considerable task than Carrera's, for which they were equipped with less adequate instruments. For, being educated anti-clericals, they could not exploit the unificatory mythology of a religion they regarded as pernicious; and being be-

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lievers in progress, they could not preach hatred of the foreigners whose capital and technical knowledge they hoped to use for the development of their country. Still, some sort of unifying hatred was urgently desirable; so an attempt was made to work up patriotic feeling against England, on the score that its government had ordered the occupation of the island of Roatun in the Gulf of Honduras and was secretly planning to annex the whole of Central America. Unfortunately perhaps for Central American unity, England was not planning to occupy the country. Had such an attempt actually been made, it is quite possible that the Five Republics might have been fused together by hatred of the common enemy.

Europe possesses no shared mythology and it will obviously take some time to fabricate such an instrument of unification. A shared hatred is also lacking, but could be worked up in next to no time. There is a possibility, for example, that dislike and fear of Hitlerian Germany may result in a movement towards the unification, or at least the rational co-operation, of the other national States. If this were to happen we should have to bless the Nazis for being the unintentional benefactors of suffering humanity.

But hatred for a near neighbour easily becomes unplatonic. Almost as effective as a unifier, shared loathing for people at a distance has this further merit: it need not involve the hater in any unpleasant practical consequences. It may be that our delegates will think

it worth while to unify Europe by means of hatred for Asia. Such hatred would have excellent economic justifications. Combining efficiency with a lower-than-European standard of living, the Japanese can undersell us in every department; directly or indirectly they threaten to take the bread out of innumerable European mouths. Nothing would be easier than to work up hatred for these formidable rivals; and as they live a very long way away, there is a chance that the hatred might remain, so far as most of us are concerned, relatively platonic – an excuse for collective orgies with no ‘morning after’ of high explosives and mustard gas.

Orgies with no morning after – paradisaical vision! But meanwhile the tariff walls are raised a little higher and yet another embargo is placed on foreign goods; more bombers take the air, the new tanks do their forty miles an hour across the countryside, the heavy guns throw their shells still further, the submarines travel even faster, the dyeworks are yet better equipped to manufacture poison gas. And the insanity is infectious. It rages in Central America as it rages in Europe. Never have the Guatemalteco soldiers been so well equipped as they are to-day. And what discipline! It seems a shame that they should have nothing to do but line the streets on ceremonial occasions. But, patience! a time will doubtless come, quite soon. . .

An Irish Schooling

by Seán O'Faoláin

THE school I speak of was the Lancasterian School in the town of Cork, one of the first, and maybe the first, Bell and Lancaster schools founded in Ireland. This I did not discover until long afterwards, for we all associated it with the enemies of the Tudors, and the good monks who taught us, being mentally and emotionally rather like children themselves, did not, I imagine, discover it at any time. It was originally a barrack or a poorhouse, or maybe a madhouse, but at any rate it was born weary like a Buddhist in his fourth transmigration, and should never have been used in our time for any purpose whatever. I do not know when it was founded, but I am certain that it defied all the change and alteration that overtook schooling since the days of Wordsworth, and I know that the hoary, dusty, cobwebbed atmosphere of the place remained to the end the atmosphere of Carleton rather than of Joyce – the atmosphere, that is, of an enormous hedge-school in what, so bizarre was the life there, must surely have been a discarded asylum.

At the centre of the school was the Big Room, what wealthier folk would have called the Aula Maxima, the roof was broken on either side of the roof-

tree by a clerestory composed of hundreds upon hundreds of patches of glass; beneath this clerestory, 'dreadful and dizzy to cast one's eyes so low', four or five classes would 'toe the line' in different parts of the hall, curved about a horseshoe chalked on the floor, at whose centre stood the black-robed monk in charge. Every second boy was barelegged, with the mud drying between his toes and zoomorphic tracery on his shins from sitting in the ashes of his laneway home. At play-time, when other classes were howling in the yard, we would stand thus, each boy with a little penthouse balanced on his head, an open book, to protect him from the penalty of falling glass. For the great game in the yard outside was what I have since heard called the Roof Game. It began with the throwing of a ball, a thing of paper and twine, sideways on the slates, and it ended with a mad tangle fighting under the gutters to catch the ball, when, where, and if it fell.

East and west were the aisles to this nave, sheltering one or two more classes each, as well as the science-room, which was also office, drawing-room, monks' lunch-room, and place of more painful and less modest corporal pun-

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ishment. The Infants were tucked away behind the apse; there was a black-hole where chronic offenders were sometimes flung to whimper among the coals and the rats; a gravelled yard ran on each side of the building; the foul jakes lined it behind; and there was, finally, the caretaker's cottage where he stored thrown-out copy-books for fuel and broke up old desks for fire-wood.

I shall always associate this school with Lowood School in *Jane Eyre*, not because we ever had any Reverend Mr. Brocklehurst, but because in spite of much vermin, some disease, and no external beauty, in spite of the cold and the smells, we managed to create inside that crumbling hole a faery world of our own – and by *we*, I mean the monks and the children together, for these Brothers were truly brothers to us and I think we really loved them. They were country lads with butter-milk complexions, hats prevented from extinguishing their faces only by the divine prescience of ears, hands still rough from the spade and feet still heavy with the clay. I recall their complete lack of self-consciousness with us – which did not prevent them from being shy and blushing in the presence of other monks – the complete absence of the keep-the-boy-in-his-place rule which (perhaps largely in self-defence) is so common in High Schools. Some, to be sure, were disliked – it is not in the nature of small boys to hate – and because they were mincing or had no sense of fun we called them names like Cinderella or Sloppy Dan.

But in general it is their simplicity

that I recall now, their jokes that were not made simple for our benefit but were born simple of simple parents, the games they played with us so lustily with bits of stick or cloth-balls in the rough yard, their inquisitiveness about our home lives, their natural piety that threw a benignity over all our days. I recall their general and particular ignorance with a general and particular delight. I once wrote a childish essay on Fishing for my Brother Josephus in which I cheekily described how I went fishing up the Lee and fished up a girl; and I still remember the utter joy with which they all crowded about that essay, gloating in their own knowledge of worldly wickedness. And, to reverse the roles, how innocent Brother Patrick seemed to us when he began to warn us about the great temptations of the summer time and how he actually knew little boys who went swimming without any bathing drawers at all!

As they grew older and were instructed better they gradually moved on to High School or Secondary School where, with the increase in their 'little learning', they often became priggish and unlikeable; and they often became unhappy, and between comic and tragic like the two poor men, who for all their thirty years or more we used to watch throwing their eyes mawkishly after girls. One was always hearing of this or that monk who left the Order or was about to leave it, though I find it hard to imagine how they could ever earn a living after being so long cloistered away from the competing world

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As to their particular ignorance I remember it, I hope, not with the slightest feeling of superiority, but because, even then we knew that their weight of knowledge did not prevent them from being very near our ignorance. They – the pronoun is colloquial and exclusive – commonly mispronounced words and nameplaces in frequent use, saying NewFOUNDland, HanOVER, *coincidence*, were free with superfluous syllables as in *cathedaral*, failed to recess the accent as in *contràry* – it is the natural conservatism of the provincial which still says *tay* for *tea*, that says *demonstrate* for *demonstrate*; they were hopelessly muddled by *shall* and *will*; the use of the Gaelic present-habitual for the English present, *They do be* for *They are*, was widespread, and so on – lapses which are all easily remembered because forgotten with difficulty among the ‘little gents’ of the higher school. I can scarcely believe my memory when I seem to recall being told by Brother Josephus that combustion is due to phlogiston; but I do know, having verified it by the memory of others, that Brother Philip told us that circumcision was a small circle cut out on the forehead of Jewish children; clearly his reading misled him; also we were told there were twelve minerals, and we were given their names, and that was that. On the other hand I always think admiringly of old Brother Magnus who offered sixpence to anybody who would extract salt from the seawater in the harbour, and when one or two did it, offered a silver

watch to any boy who would extract sugar from a turnip.

The point is, we all worked together as in a family, conspiring, for example against Inspectors from the Board of Education, or even against the Headmaster. ‘I remember one Inspector of Hygiene who came to lecture us on cleanliness – a badly needed lecture in that school – about nails, and hair and teeth and so forth, while our Brother Josephus stood in the background with a slow smile about his lips. When the man of cleanliness was finished Josephus showed him out coldly and then, turning back to us, swept us together in his bosom for ever and ever in one wave of indignation by saying in contempt of all inspectors: ‘Boys! He thinks ye’re filth!’ When more important inspectors were coming how we worked in preparation, often copying in reams from old boy’s essays, in the full knowledge that it was all a ‘racket’; and after the inspection, during which the poor little monks stood about pale and trembling, we would crowd about our particular Josephus to know if we had done well – well by him, that is – rejoicing if he told us mildly that we had done quite well, then pulling us up short in the sudden effort to recapture his sadly damaged authority.

I know I am doing them all an injustice, and doing those years an injustice too. It is another world, not only gone for ever now, but not to be recaptured even in memory. All I did

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and learned there was done and learned for the love of the thing. In the High School, life and learning became (and have ever since remained) complicated by the importunity of those two heritages of Adam, the conscience and the will. From that complicated world to look back on a world where these genii did not exist is to look into a blinding light. Life there was a succession of dream-days which now as a writer – self-conscious like all my tribe – I envy almost to tears, because they were the only days of my life that were really lived. Then there was, in our minds, no strivings towards an end, as in school later (or towards perfection, as in the conscience of the grown man, writer or artisan) to annotate the joys of living by reminders of the seriousness of life. Far otherwise, all the seriousness of life was annotated by the sheer, unconscious joy of being simply alive. I had not eaten of the apple of ambition and was unaware of nakedness.

Do not imagine that a child does not enjoy ‘being simply alive’, or that when a man says he recalls pleasant times at school that he means anything but times that seemed pleasant then. Indeed, the *recherche du temps perdu* is always melancholy with a sense of loss where the *temps* itself glowed with immediacy

What of those wet Southern days when few children dared come to school and the feeling of comradeship among those that came was so great that we hated to return home? When the rain lashed the patched windows in the clerestory and we crowded over the

fire to talk of the tawny rivers of the city rising in flood! When we rounded our cheeks and rolled our eyes and said Oooh! to the wind under the door! Yes! One could weep now because never again can one say Oooh! to the wind under the door, but then it was all sheer delight in the delights of Delight itself. And then there were days before breaking-up at summer time, when all fear of inspectors was vanished, and we did nothing for days but clean the white ink-wells, and roll up the maps, and disclose on the walls behind them sudden stored blasts of light, and shoved dusters down one another’s backs, and crushed closer than ever about the skirts of the Brothers to talk of our home, and our holidays, and their homes and their holidays, and our future – which meant next year – and theirs that meant, alas, poor adults, so much more. You looked back at the last moment at the crumb-laden floors, and the dust under the desks, all empty, and you felt the crumbs at the bottom of your school-sack that suddenly having lost all its import smelt only of vanished days; and you turned away as to a long exile.

It’s the sense of wonder which is gone now, I suppose, the capacity of enjoyment killed by constant ratiocination, by too much thinking of things instead of doing them. Even those casualties from falling glass, or stones flung in yard-fights, were welcome because you were led out by an elder boy to be stitched or bandaged at the

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hospital, a pleasantly terrifying experience, during which you wondered if you were really going to die. These breaks were typical of that school; it was a delight to be sent making up the rolls, doing all the adding and subtracting and compiling that the Head was too lazy to do himself; to be sent out to the street just before roll-call to see if any laggards were coming, in which case you certainly told the shivering wretch that Sloppy Dan would KILL him when he got inside; magical to be sent in search of a missing pupil down among the penthouse lanes of the city, in and out of Featherbed or Cut-throat where the shifts and shawls drying from window to window made the colours of a canopy in a papal procession, where every dark doorway under the thatch shot by its blob of firelight, delayed further your already slow-lingering steps.

One may think that it was not a good school, but I think it was – fairly good. Its great drawback was that a clever boy fell at once into habits of idleness there for lack of competition; the pace was set, perforce, for slow-coaches. But the great point about the place was that it was not even faintly 'respectable' and though the teaching was serious it was never solemn. We learned there that learning can be an interesting occupation, and we learned to enjoy without question, as equals, one another's company. When I think of the other kind of school, your High, Secondary, or Public School, where the little gentlemen are critical of one another without rest, and think of learning

only as a means to an end, I sigh with relief at being free of it as one sighs on waking from a painful dream.

Not that my school was not cold and cheerless and had not some bad hours. I can never forget that one or two of these monks were rude, brutal men who terrified the very heart out of us at times. I am thinking particularly of one huge fellow in the Third, or Fourth class, I forget which, who had a throat and a voice like a bull, and a strong right arm coming down with the leather strap, half an inch thick, on our palms. He used, at one period, collect bread from the monks' lunch-room, and after school set two of his bigger boys, newsboys by night, schoolchildren by day, fighting with bare fists and bare to the waist, for these scraps of food; and withheld the bread one afternoon because they were either not hungry enough, or were too hungry, to take part in his circus. I saw him in the street, years later, when I was in the University, and I looked at his dark jowl with sideward glance, almost in fear.

The place is gone now, not a stone remains upon a stone, and a boot-factory in red brick stands where it stood. A new, modern school replaces it, all white tiles and parquet, very anodyne and aseptic. That is all to the good, but it is not that which gives it an advantage over the old place. It is beside fields, and below it there are trees through which one sees the flowing river with cows in other fields beyond. In our old place there were a few ragged trees growing out of asphalt but not a

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blade of grass to be seen anywhere; and
a school without a field is a prison.

If I were a child again and both
schools stood, to which would I go? If
not to some sterner, more ambitious
school than either of them? It is a
question *à hausser les épaules*. Certainly,
if it is a matter of getting on in the
world, to neither. But if one places

more value on other things, then this
type of school is ideal, and according
as you value these 'other things' the
more, then the more reason to go to
some old shack like mine where,
although one learned little about the
world, one imbibed a great deal about
life – and perhaps a little about the
next life too.

The Living Poem

by Herbert Palmer

My torment loosed a whirling
Word,
A meteor of blasting light.
It zipped and zooed and sizzed and
swirled
And bummed and beetled through the
night
But suddenly it blazed a curve.
Zzzz! Flop! Across my route it rolled.
I looked; and saw in dazed concern
A jagged cinder black and cold.
I said, 'What is this thing that whirled
So strangely from my foaming brain?
There's something here in darkness
furled
That striving should make bright and
plain.'

And so I bent in toil to it,
Seeking to give it brain and nerve.
I brought the softest soil to it,
And many a green and yellow turve
I cried and sighed and raved to it.
Over my head the zenith flared.
I strained and heaved and slaved to it;
But the word lay dead across the Word.
I ceased. When lo! the crust seemed lit.
Deep in my brain my fingers curled.
I blew. There came a fire on it, –
Spears, banners, flags, a living world
Of waving meadows, trees and corn.
I breathed into its starry might.
And Adam carolled to the morn;
And Eve came with the fading light.

The Dumb Ox : A Study of Ernest Hemingway by Wyndham Lewis

I

ERNEST HEMINGWAY is a very considerable artist in prose-fiction. Besides this, or with this, his work possesses a penetrating quality, like an animal speaking. A quality in the work of the author of *Men Without Women* suggests that we are in the presence of a writer who is not merely a conspicuous chessman in the big-business book-game of the moment, but something much finer than that. Let me attempt to isolate that quality for you, in such a way as not to damage it too much: for having set out to demonstrate the *political significance* of this artist's work, I shall, in the course of that demonstration, resort to a dissection of it – not the best way, I am afraid, to bring out the beauties of the finished product. This dissection is, however, necessary for my purpose here. 'I have a weakness for Ernest Hemingway,' as the egregious Miss Stein says: it is not agreeable to me to pry into his craft, but there is no help for it if I am to reach certain important conclusions.

But *political significance*! That is surely the last thing one would expect to find in such books as *In Our Time*, *The Sun also Rises*, *Men Without Women*, or *Farewell to Arms*. And indeed it is difficult to imagine a writer whose

mind is more entirely closed to politics than is Hemingway's. I do not suppose he has ever heard of the Five-Year Plan, though I dare say he knows that artists pay no income tax in Mexico, and is quite likely to be following closely the agitation of the Mexican matadors to get themselves recognized as 'artists' so that they may pay no income tax. I expect he has heard of Hitler, but thinks of him mainly, if he is acquainted with the story, as the Boche who went down into a cellar with another Boche and captured thirty Frogs and came back with an Iron Cross. He is interested in the sports of death, in the sad things that happen to those engaged in the sports of love – in sand-sharks and in Wilson-spoons – in war, but *not* in the things that cause war, or the people who profit by it, or in the ultimate human destinies involved in it. He lives, or affects to live, *submerged*. He is in the multitudinous ranks of *those to whom things happen* – terrible things of course, and of course stoically borne. He has never heard, or affects never to have heard, that there is another and superior element, inhabited by a type of unnatural men which preys upon that of the submerged type. Or perhaps it is not quite a submerged mankind to

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which he belongs, or affects to belong, but to something of the sort described in one of Faulkner's war stories: 'But after twelve years,' Faulkner writes, 'I think of us as bugs in the surface of the water, isolant and aimless and unflagging. Not on the surface; in it, within that line of demarcation not air and not water, sometimes submerged, sometimes not.'

But – twelve, fifteen years afterwards – to be *submerged*, most of the time, is Hemingway's idea. It is a little bit of an *art pur* notion, but it is, I think, extremely effective, in his case. Hemingway has really taken up his quarters in the stupid medium of the sub-world, the *bêtise* of the herd, and has mastered the medium entirely, so that he is of it, and yet not of it, in a very satisfactory way.

Another manner of looking at it would be to say that Ernest Hemingway is the Noble Savage of Rousseau, but a white version, the simple American man. That is at all events the role that he has chosen, and he plays it with an imperturbable art and grace beyond praise.

II

To find a parallel to *In Our Time* or *Farewell to Arms* you have to go to *Colomba* or to *Chronique du règne de Charles ix*: and in one sense Prosper Mérimée supplies the historical key to these two ex-soldiers – married, in their literary craft, to a theatre of action à l'outrance. The scenes at the siege of La Rochelle in the *Chronique du Règne de Charles ix* for instance: in the burning of the mill when the ensign is roasted in the window, that is the Hemingway subjects-

matter to perfection – a man melted in his armour like a shell-fish in its shell – melted lobster in its red armour.

"S'ils tentaient de sauter par les fenêtres, ils tombaient dans les flammes, ou bien étaient reçus sur la pointe des piques. . . Un enseigne, revêtu d'une armure complète, essaya de sauter comme les autres par une fenêtre étroite. Sa cuirasse se terminait, suivant une mode alors assez commune, par une espèce de jupon en fer qui couvrait les cuisses et le ventre, et s'élargissait comme le haut d'un entonnoir, de manière à permettre de marcher facilement. La fenêtre n'était pas assez large pour laisser passer cette partie de son armure, et l'enseigne, dans son trouble, s'y était précipité avec tant de violence, qu'il se trouva avoir la plus grande partie du corps en dehors sans pouvoir remuer, et pris comme dans un étau. Cependant les flammes montaient jusqu'à lui, échauffaient son armure, et l'y brûlaient lentement comme dans une fournaise ou dans ce fameux taureau d'airain inventé par Phalaris."

Compare this with the following:

"We were in a garden at Mons. Young Buckley came in with his patrol from across the river. The first German I saw climbed up over the garden wall. We waited till he got one leg over and then potted him. He had so much equipment on and looked awfully surprised and fell down into the garden. Then three more came over further down the wall. We shot them. They all came just like that."

'In no century would Prosper Mérimée have been a theologian or metaphysician,' and if that is true of Mérimée, it is at least equally true of his American prototype. But their 'formulas' sound rather the same:

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"indifferent in politics . . . all the while he is feeding all his scholarly curiosity, his imagination, the very eye, with the, to him ever delightful, relieving, reassuring spectacle, of those straightforward forces in human nature, which are also matters of fact. There is the formula of Merimée¹ the enthusiastic amateur of rude, crude, naked force in men and women wherever it could be found . . . there are no half-lights. . . . Sylla, the false Demetrius, Carmen, Colomba, that impassioned self within himself, have no atmosphere. Painfully distinct in outline, inevitable to sight, unrelieved, there they stand, like solitary mountain forms on some hard, perfectly transparent day. What Merimée gets around his singularly sculpturesque creations is neither more nor less than empty space." Thus Walter Pater on Merimée.

I have quoted the whole of the passage because it gives you 'the formula', equally for the author of *Carmen* and of *The Sun also Rises* – namely *the enthusiastic amateur of rude, crude, naked force in men and women*: but it also brings out very well, subsequently, the nature of the radical and extremely significant *difference* existing between these two men, of differing nations and epochs – sharing so singularly a taste for physical violence and for fine writing, but nothing else. Between them there is this deep gulf fixed: that gifted he of to-day is 'the man that things are done to' – even the 'I' in *The Sun also Rises* allows his Jew puppet to knock him about and 'put him to sleep' with a crash on the jaw, and this first person singular covers a very aimless, will-less person, to say the least of it: whereas that *he* of the world of *Carmen* (so much admired

by Nietzsche for its bright Latin violence and directness – *la gaya scienza*) or of Corsican vendetta, he was in love with *will*, as much as with violence. he did not celebrate in his stories a spirit that suffered bodily injury and mental disaster with the stoicism of an athletic clown in a particularly brutal circus – or of oxen (however robust) beneath a crushing yoke: *he*, the inventor of Colomba, belonged to a race of men for whom action meant *their* acting, with all the weight and momentum of the whole of their being: *he* of post-Napoleonic France celebrated intense spiritual energy and purpose, using physical violence as a mere means to that only half-animal ideal. *Sylla*, *Demetrius*, *Colomba*, even *de Mergy*, summon to our mind a world bursting with purpose – even if always upon the personal and very animal plane, and with no more universal ends: while Hemingway's books, on the other hand, scarcely contain a figure who is not in some way futile, clown-like, passive, and above all *purposeless*. His world of men and women (*in violent action*, certainly) is completely empty of will. His puppets are leaves, *very violently* blown hither and thither; drugged or at least deeply intoxicated phantoms of a sort of matter-of-fact shell-shock.

In *Farewell to Arms* the hero is a young American who has come over to Europe for the fun of the thing, as an alternative to baseball, to take part in the Sport of Kings. It has not occurred to him that it is no longer the sport of kings, but the turning-point in the history of the earth at which he is assist-

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ing, when men must either cease thinking like children and abandon such sports, or else lose their freedom for ever, much more effectively than any mere *king* could ever cause them to lose it. For him, it remains 'war' in the old-fashioned semi-sporting sense. Throughout this ghastly event, he proves himself a thorough-going sport, makes several hairbreadth, Fenimore Cooper-like, escapes, but never from first to last, betrays a spark of intelligence. Indeed, his physical stoicism, admirable as it is, is as nothing to his really heroic imperviousness to thought. This 'war' – Gallipoli, Paschendaele, Caporetto – is just another 'scrap'. The Anglo-Saxon American – the 'Dough-boy' – and the Anglo-Saxon Tommy – join hands, in fact, outrival each other in a stolid determination absolutely to ignore, come what may, what all this is about. Whoever may be in the secrets of destiny – may indeed be destiny itself – *they* are not nor ever will be. They are an integral part of that world *to whom things happen*: they are not those who cause or connive at the happenings, and that is perfectly clear.

*Pack up your troubles in your old kut bag,
Smile boys, that's the style,*

and *keep smiling*, what's more, from ear to ear, a *should-I-worry?* 'good sport' smile, as do the Hollywood Stars when they are being photographed, as did the poor Bairnsfather 'Tommy' – the 'mud-died oaf at the goal' – of all oafishness!

I hope this does not seem irrelevant to you: it is not, let me reassure

you, but very much the contrary. The roots of all these books are in the War of 1914–1918. The war-years were a democratic, a *levelling* school, and Hemingway comes from a pretty thoroughly 'levelled' nation, where personality is the thing least liked. The rigid organization of the communal life as revealed in *Middletown*, for instance (or such a phenomenon as N.I.R.A.) is akin to the military state. So *will*, as expressed in the expansion of the individual, is not a thing we should expect to find illustrated by a deliberately typical American writer.

Those foci of passionate personal energy which we find in Merimée, we should look for in vain in the pages of Hemingway. In place of Don José or of Colomba we get a pack of drugged or intoxicated marionettes. These differences are exceedingly important.

So any attempt to identify 'the formula' for Prosper Merimée with that of Ernest Hemingway would break down. You are led at once to a realization of the critical difference between these two universes of discourse: of how an appetite for the extremity of violence exists in both, but in one case, it is personal ambition, family pride, romantic love that are at stake, and their satisfaction is violently sought and undertaken, whereas in the other case purposeless violence, for the sake of the 'kick', is pursued and recorded, and the 'thinking subject' is to regard himself as nothing more significant than a ripple beneath the breeze upon a pond.

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III

If we come down to the manner, specifically to the style, in which these sensational impressions are conveyed, again most interesting discoveries await us: for, especially with Mr. Hemingway, the story is told in the tone, and with the vocabulary, of the persons described. The rhythm is the anonymous folk-rhythm of the urban proletariat. Mr. Hemingway is, self-consciously, a folk-prose-poet in the way that Robert Burns was a folk-poet. But what is curious about this is that the modified *Beach-la-mar* in which he writes, is, more or less, the speech that is proposed for everybody in the future – it is a volapuk which probably will be ours to-morrow. For if the chief executive of the United States greets the Roman Catholic democratic leader (Al Smith) with the exclamation ‘Hallo old potato!’ to-day, the English political leaders will be doing so the day after to-morrow. And the Anglo-Saxon *Beach-la-mar* of the future will not be quite the same thing as Chaucer or Dante, contrasted with the learned tongue. For the latter was the speech of a race rather than of a class, whereas our ‘vulgar tongue’ will really be *vulgar*.

But in the case of Hemingway the folk-business is very seriously complicated by a really surprising fact. He has suffered an overmastering influence, which cuts his work off from any other, except that of his mistress (for his master has been a *mistress!*). So much is this the case, that their destinies (his and that of the person who so strangely

hypnotized him with her repeating habits and her *faux-naïf* prattle) are for ever interlocked. His receptivity was so abnormally pronounced (even as a craftsman, this capacity for being *the person that things are done to* rather than the person who naturally initiates what is to be done to others, was so marked) and the affinity thus disclosed was found so powerful! I don’t like speaking about this, for it is such a first-class complication, and yet it is in a way so irrelevant to the spirit which informs his work and must have informed it had he never made this apparently overwhelming ‘contact’. But there it is: if you ask yourself how you would be able to tell a page of Hemingway, if it were unexpectedly placed before you, you would be compelled to answer, *Because it would be like Miss Stein!* And if you were asked how you would know it was not by Miss Stein, you would say, *Because it would probably be about prize-fighting, war, or the bull-ring, and Miss Stein does not write about war, boxing or bull-fighting!*

It is very uncomfortable in real life when people become so captivated with somebody else’s tricks that they become a sort of caricature or echo of the other: and it is no less embarrassing in books, at least when one entertains any respect for the victim of the fascination. But let us take a passage or two and get this over – it is very unpleasant. Let us take Krebs – the ‘he’ in this passage is Krebs, a returned soldier in a Hemingway story:

“Now he would have liked a girl if she had come to him and not wanted to

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talk. But here at home it was all too complicated. He knew he could never get through it all again. It was not worth the trouble. That was the thing about French girls and German girls. There was not all this talking. You couldn't talk much and you did not need to talk. It was simple and you were friends. He thought about France and then he began to think about Germany. On the whole he liked Germany better. He did not want to leave Germany. He did not want to come home. Still, he had come home. He sat on the front porch.

"He liked the girls that were walking along the other side of the street. He liked the look of them much better than the French girls or the German girls. But the world they were in was not the world he was in. He would like to have one of them. But it was not worth it. They were such a nice pattern. He liked the pattern. It was exciting. But he would not go through all the talking. He did not want one badly enough. He liked to look at them all, though. It was not worth it."

So much for Krebs: now open Miss Stein and 'meet' Melanctha.

"Rose was lazy but not dirty and Sam was careful but not fussy, and then there was Melanctha. . . . When Rose's baby was coming to be born, Rose came to stay in the house where Melanctha Herbert lived just then, . . . Rose went there to stay, so that she might have the doctor from the hospital. . . . Melanctha Herbert had not made her life all simple like Rose Johnson. Melanctha had not found it easy with herself to make her wants and what she had, agree.

"Melanctha Herbert was always losing what she had in wanting all the things she saw. Melanctha was always being left when she was not leaving others.

"Melanctha Herbert always loved too hard and much too often. She was always full with mystery and subtle movements. . . ." etc. etc. etc.

There is no possibility, I am afraid, of slurring over this. It is just a thing that you have to accept as an unfortunate handicap, in an artist who is in some respects above praise. Sometimes it is less pronounced, there are occasions when it is *almost* absent — Krebs, for instance, is a full-blooded example of Hemingway steining away for all he is worth. But it is never quite absent.

How much does it matter? If we blot out Gertrude Stein, and suppose she does not exist, does this part of Hemingway's equipment help or not? We must answer *Yes* I think. It does seem to help a good deal: many of his best effects are obtained by means of it. It is so much a part of his craft, indeed, that it is difficult now to imagine Hemingway without this mannerism. He has never taken it over into a gibbering and baboonish stage as has Miss Stein. He has kept it as a valuable oddity, even if a flagrantly borrowed one — ever-present it is true, but one to which we can easily get used and come to like even as a delightfully clumsy engine of innocence. I don't mind it very much.

To say that, near to communism as we all are, it cannot matter, and is indeed praiseworthy, for a celebrated artist to take over, lock, stock and barrel, from another artist the very thing for which he is mainly known, seems to me to be going too far in the denial of the person, or the individual

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— especially as in a case of this sort, the trick is after all, in the first instance, a *personal* trick. Such a practice must result, if universally indulged in, in hybrid forms or monstrosities

And my main criticism, indeed, of the *steining* of Hemingway is that it does impose upon him an ethos — *the Stein ethos*, as it might be called. With Stein's bag of tricks he also takes over a *Weltanschauung*, which may not at all be his, and does in fact seem to contradict his major personal quality. This infantile, dull-witted, dreamy stutter compels whoever uses it to conform to the infantile, dull-witted type. He passes over into the category of *those to whom things are done*, from that of those who execute — if the latter is indeed where he originally belonged. One might even go so far as to say that this brilliant Jewish lady had made a *clown* of him by teaching Ernest Hemingway her baby-talk! So it is a pity. And it is very difficult to know where Hemingway proper begins and Stein leaves off. It is an uncomfortable situation for the critic, especially for one who 'has a weakness' for the male member to this strange spiritual partnership, and very much prefers him to the female.

Hemingway's two principal books, *The Sun also Rises* (for English publication called *Fiesta*) and *Farewell to Arms*, are delivered in the first person singular. What that involves may not be at once apparent to those who have not given much attention to literary composition. But it is not at all difficult to explain.

Suppose you, Raymond Robinson, sit down to write a romance; subject-matter, the War. You get your 'I' started off, say just before the outbreak of war, and then there is the outbreak, and then 'I flew to the nearest recruiting station and joined the army' you write. Then the 'I' goes off to the Western Front (or the Italian Front) and you will find yourself writing 'I seized the Boche by the throat with one hand and shot him in the stomach with the other,' or whatever it is you imagine your 'I' as doing. But this 'I', the reader will learn, does not bear the name on the title page, namely Raymond Robinson. He is called Geoffrey Jones. The reader will think, 'that is only a thin disguise. It is Robinson's personal experience all right!'

Now this difficulty (if it be a difficulty) is very much enhanced if (for some reason) Geoffrey Jones is *always* doing exactly the things that Raymond Robinson is known to have done. If Raymond Robinson fought gallantly at Caporetto, for instance, then Geoffrey Jones — with the choice of a whole earth at war to choose from — is at Caporetto too. If Raymond Robinson takes to the sport of bull-fighting, sure enough Geoffrey Jones — the 'I' of the novel — is there in the bull-ring too, as the night follows day. This, in fine, has been the case with Hemingway and *his* First-person-singular.

Evidently, in this situation — possessing a First-person-singular that invariably copies you in this flattering way — something must be done about it. The *First-person-singular* has to be

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endowed so palpably with qualities that could by no stretch of the imagination belong to its author that no confusion is possible. Upon this principle the 'I' of *The Sun also Rises* is described as sexually impotent, which is a complete alibi, of course, for Hemingway.

But there is more than this. The sort of First - person - singular that Hemingway invariably invokes is a dull-witted, bovine, monosyllabic simpleton. This lethargic and stuttering dummy he conducts, or pushes from behind, through all the scenes that interest him. This burlesque First-person-singular behaves in them like a moronesque version of his brilliant author. He *Steins* up and down the world, with the big lustreless ruminatory orbs of a Picasso doll-woman (of the semi-classic type Picasso patented, with enormous hands and feet). It is, in short, the very dummy that is required for the literary mannerism of Miss Stein! It is the incarnation of the Stein-stutter – the male incarnation, it is understood.

But this constipated, baffled, 'frustrated' – yes deeply and Freudianly 'frustrated' – this wooden-headed, leaden-witted, heavy-footed, loutish and oafish marionette – peering dully out into the surrounding universe like a great big bloated five-year-old – pointing at this and pointing at that – uttering simply 'CAT!' – 'HAT!' 'FOOD!' – 'SWEETIE!' – is, as a companion, infectious. His author has perhaps not been quite immune. Seen for ever through his nursery spectacles, the values of life accommodate themselves,

even in the mind of his author, to the limitations and peculiar requirements of this highly idiosyncratic puppet.

So the political aspects of Hemingway's work (if, as I started by saying, one can employ such a word as *political* in connection with a thing that is so divorced from reality as a super-innocent, queerly-sensitive, village-idiot of a few words and fewer ideas) have to be sought, if anywhere, in the personality of this *First-person singular*, imposed upon him largely by the Stein manner.

IV

We can return to the folk-prose problem now and face all the questions that the 'done gones' and 'sorta gonnas' present.

Mr. H. L. Mencken in his well-known, extremely competent and exhaustive treatise, *The American Language* (a classic in this field of research, first published fifteen years ago) affirmed that the American dialect had not yet come to the stage where it could be said to have acquired charm for 'the purists'. If used (at that time) in narrative literature it still possessed only the status of a disagreeable and socially-inferior jargon, like the cockney occurring in a Dickens novel. The novelist, having invoked it to convey the manner of speech of his rustic or provincial puppets, steps smartly away and resumes the narrative in the language of Macaulay or Horace Walpole, more or less

'In so far as it is apprehended at

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all,' Mencken wrote in 1920, 'it is only in the sense that Irish-English was apprehended a generation ago – that is, as something uncouth and comic. But that is the way that new dialects always come in – through a drum-fire of cackles. Given the poet, there may suddenly come a day when our *theirns* and *would 'a hads* will take on the barbaric stateliness of the peasant locution of old Maurya in *Riders to the Sea*.'

The reason that the dialect of the Aran Islands, or that used by Robert Burns, was so different from cockney or from the English educated speech was because it was a mixture of English and another language, Gaelic or lowland Scots, and with the intermixture of foreign words went a literal translation of foreign idioms and the distortions arrived at by a tongue accustomed to another language. It was 'broken-English', in other words, not 'low-English', or slum-English, as is cockney.

Americans are to-day un-English in blood – whatever names they may bear: and in view of this it is surprising how intact the English language remains in the United States. But the *Beach-la-mar*, as he calls it, to which Mencken is referring above, is, as it were, the cockney of America. It has this great advantage over cockney, that it is fed with a great variety of immigrant words. It is, however, fundamentally a *class-jargon*; not a jargon resulting from difference of race, and consequently of speech. It is the *patois* of the 'poor white', the negro, or the uneducated immigrant. It is not the language spoken by Mrs. Alice Roosevelt Longworth, for

instance, or by Ernest Hemingway for that matter. But it is very *American*. And it is a *patois*, a fairly good rendering of which any American is competent to give. And you have read above the affectionate way Mencken refers to our 'theirns' and 'would 'a hads'.

English as spoken in America is more vigorous and expressive than Oxford English, I think. It is easy to mistake a native from the wilds of Dorsetshire for an American, I have found: and were 'educated' English used upon a good strong reverberant Dorsetshire basis, for instance, it would be all to the good, it is my opinion. Raleigh, Drake, and the rest of them, must have talked rather like that.

But with cockney it is not at all the same thing. There you get a degradation of English – it is *proletariat*, city-slum English, like Dublin-slum English. That is in a different category altogether to the weighty, rapid, and expressive torrent of the best Dorsetshire talk; and, as I have said, the *best* American is in the same category as the Dorsetshire – or as the non-slum Irish – a good, sound accent, too. But the question to be answered is whether the *Beach-la-mar* Mr. Mencken has in mind is not too much the deteriorated pidgin tongue of the United States; and whether, if that is *affectioné* too much by the *litterati* – as being the most *American* thing available, like a jazz – it is not going to be a vulgar corruption, which will vulgarize, as well as enrich, the tongue. So far it exists generally in inverted commas. Is it to be let out or not? A question for Americans.

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While England was a uniquely powerful empire-state, ruled by an aristocratic caste, its influence upon the speech as upon the psychology of the American ex-colonies was overwhelming. But to-day that ascendancy has almost entirely vanished. The aristocratic caste is nothing but a shadow of itself, the cinema has brought the American scene and the American dialect nightly into the heart of England, and the 'Americanizing' process is far advanced 'Done gones', 'good guys' and 'buddies' sprout upon the lips of cockney children as readily as upon those to the manner born, of New York or Chicago: and there is no politically-powerful literate class any longer now, in our British 'Banker's Olympus' to confer prestige upon an exact and intelligent selective speech. Americanization – which is also for England, at least, proletarianization – is too far advanced to require underlining, even for people who fail usually to recognize anything until it has been in existence for a quarter of a century.

But if America has come to England, there has been no reciprocal movement of England into the United States: indeed, with the new American nationalism, England is deliberately kept out: and all the great influence that England exerted formally – merely by being there and speaking the same tongue and sharing the same fundamental political principles – that is to-day a thing of the past. So the situation is this, as far as our common language is concerned: the destiny of England and the United States of America is more than ever one.

But it is now the American influence that is paramount. The tables have effectively been turned in that respect

V

But there is a larger issue even than that local to the English-speaking nations. English is of all languages the simplest grammatically and the easiest to make into a *Beach-la-mar* or *pidgin* tongue. Whether this fact, combined with its 'extraordinary tendency to degenerate into slang of every kind', is against it, is of some importance for the future – for it will have less and less grammar, obviously, and more and more cosmopolitan slang. – Mr. Mencken is of opinion that a language cannot be too simple – he is all for *Beach-la-mar*. The path towards analysis and the elimination of inflection, has been trod by English so thoroughly that, in its American form, it should to-day win the race for a universal volapuk. Indeed, as Mr. Mencken says, 'the foreigner essaying it, indeed, finds his chief difficulty, not in mastering its forms, but in grasping its lack of form. He doesn't have to learn a new and complex grammar, what he has to do is to forget grammar. Once he has done so, the rest is a mere matter of acquiring a vocabulary.'

There is, it is true, the difficulty of the vowel sounds: but that is easily settled. Standard English possesses nineteen distinct vowel sounds: no other living European tongue except Portuguese, so Mr. Mencken says, possesses so many. Modern Greek, for

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instance, can only boast of five, we are told. 'The (American) immigrant, facing all these vowels, finds some of them quite impossible: the Russian Jew, for example, cannot manage *ur*. As a result, he tends to employ a neutralized vowel in the situations which present difficulties, and this neutralized vowel, supported by the slip-shod speech-habits of the native proletariat, makes steady progress'

That that 'neutralized vowel' has made great progress in American no one would deny who has been there; and, starting in the natural language-difficulties of the Central European immigrant, the above-mentioned 'neutralized vowel' will make its way over here in due course, who can doubt it? These vowels must be watched. *Watch your vowels* should be our next national slogan! The fatal grammatical easiness of English is responsible, however, for such problems as these, as much as the growing impressionability of the English nation, and the proletarianization, rather than the reverse, of the American.

If you place side by side the unfortunate impressionability of Hemingway, which caused him to adopt integrally the half-wit simplicity of repetitive biblical diction patented by Miss Stein, and the other fact that Mr. Hemingway, being an American nationalist by temperament, is inclined to gravitate stylistically towards the national underdog dialect, in the last resort to the kind of *Beach-la-mar* I have been discussing, you have the two principal factors in Hemingway as artist in prose-fiction, to make of what you can.

Take up any book of his, again, and open it at random: you will find a page of stuff that is, considered in isolation, valueless as writing. It is not written: it is lifted out of Nature and very artfully and adroitly tumbled out upon the page: it is the *brut* material of every-day proletarian speech and feeling. The *matière* is cheap and coarse: but not because it is proletarian speech merely, but because it is *the prose of reality* – the prose of the street-car or the provincial newspaper or the five and ten cent store

It is not writing. I read a page as I come to it, just as I should watch scenes unfolding on the screen in the cinema without pictorial criticism; it contributes its fraction to the general effect. The cumulative effect is impressive, as *the events themselves* would be. It is like reading a newspaper, day by day, about some matter of absorbing interest – say the reports of a divorce, murder, or libel action. If you say *anyone could write it*, you are mistaken there, because, to obtain that smooth effect, of commonplace reality, there must be no sentimental or other heightening, the number of words expended must be proportionate to the importance and the length of the respective phases of the action, and any false move or overstatement would at once stand out and tell against it. If an inferior reporter to Hemingway took up the pen, that fact would at once be detected by a person sensitive to reality.

It is an art, then, from this standpoint, like the cinema, or like those 'modernist' still-life pictures in which,

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in place of *painting* a match box upon the canvas, a piece of actual match box is stuck on. A recent example of this (I choose it because a good many people will have seen it) is the cover design of the French periodical *Minotaure*, in which Picasso has pasted and tacked various things together, sticking a line drawing of the Minotaur in the middle. Hemingway's is a poster-art, in this sense: or a *cinema in words*. The *steining* in the text of Hemingway is as it were the hand-made part – if we are considering it as 'super-realist' design. a manipulation of the photograph if we are regarding it as a film.

If you say that this is not the way that Dante wrote, that these are not artistically permanent creations – or not permanent in the sense of a verse of Bishop King, or a page of *Gulliver*, I agree. But it is what we have got: there is actually *bad* and *good* of this kind; and I for my part enjoy what I regard as the good, without worrying any more about it than that.

That a particular phase in the life of humanity is implicit in this art is certain. It is one of the first fruits of the *proletarianization* which, as a result of the amazing revolutions in the technique of industry, we are all undergoing, whether we like it or not. But this purely political, or sociological side to the question can be brought out, I believe, with great vividness by a quotation. Here, for instance, is a fragment of a story of a mutiny at sea?

"I opened the door a little, about two inches, and saw there was a rope round the companion, which prevented

the doors opening. Big Harry and Lips asked me what I wanted. I said I wanted to go down to the galley. Big Harry said: 'Plenty of time between this and eight o'clock; you stop down below.' I then went into the chief mate's room, which was the nearest to me. There was nobody there. I went to the second mate's room, he was not there. I went to the captain's pillow, it was standing up in his bed, and I found two revolvers loaded, one with six shots and one with four. I took possession of them and put them in my pockets. I then stood on the cabin table in the after cabin, and lifted the skylight up and tried to get out there. Renken was standing at the wheel, and he called out, 'Come aft, boys, the steward is coming out of the skylight.' I then closed the skylight and came down again. The after skylight was close to the wheel, about ten feet as near as I could guess. I could see him. The light used for the compass is in the skylight, and the wheel is in the back of it. The light is fastened to the skylight to light the compass, and the compass is just in front of the wheel. Before I could get the skylight closed I heard their steps coming aft, and I went down into the cabin and told the boy to light a fire. Shortly afterwards I heard five shots fired on deck . . ."

That is not by Hemingway, though it quite well might be. I should not be able to tell it was not by Hemingway if it were shown me as a fragment.

But is this by him?

"Inside on a wooden bunk lay a young Indian woman. She had been trying to have her baby for two days. All the old women in the camp had been helping her. The men had moved off up the road to sit in the dark and smoke out of range of the noise she

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made She screamed just as Nick and the two Indians followed his father and Uncle George into the shanty. She lay in the lower bunk, very big under a quilt. Her head was turned to one side. In the upper bunk was her husband. He had cut his foot very badly with an axe three days before. He was smoking a pipe. The room smelled very bad. Nick's father ordered some water to be put on the stove, while it was heating he spoke to Nick. 'This lady is going to have a baby, Nick,' he said 'I know,' said Nick 'You don' know,' said his father. 'Listen to me. What she is going through is called being in labour. The baby wants to be born and she wants it to be born. All her muscles are trying to get the baby born That is what is happening when she screams 'I see,' Nick said Just then the woman cried out."

The first of these two passages is from a book entitled *Forty Years in the Old Bailey* It is the account of a mutiny and murder on the high seas, the trial occurring on May 3rd and 4th, 1876. It was evidence verbatim of one Constant von Hoydonck, a Belgian, twenty-five years of age, who joined the vessel *Lennie* at Antwerp, as chiefsteward, on October 22nd. This is a *Querschnitt*, a slice, of 'real life': and how close Hemingway is to such material as this can be seen by comparing it with the second passage out of *In our Time*.

That, I think, should put you in possession of all that is essential for an understanding of the work of this very notable artist; an understanding I mean; I do not mean that, as a work of art, a book of his should be approached in this critical and anatomizing spirit. That is another matter. Where the 'politics' come in I suppose by this time you will have gathered. This is the voice of the 'folk', of the masses, who are the cannon-fodder, the cattle outside the slaughter-house, serenely chewing the cud – *of those to whom things are done*, in contrast to those who have executive will and intelligence. It is itself innocent of politics – one might almost add alas! That does not affect its quality as art. The expression of the soul of the dumb ox would have a penetrating beauty of its own, if it were uttered with genius – with bovine genius (and in the case of Hemingway that is what has happened): just as much as would the folk-song of the baboon, or of the 'Praying Mantis'. But where the politics crop up is that if we take this to be the typical art of a civilization – and there is no serious writer who stands higher in Anglo-Saxony to-day than does Ernest Hemingway – then we are by the same token saying something very definite about that civilization.

Saturnina's Destiny

by Jenny Ballou

I

As long as the affairs of Saturnina's heart went well, our domestic life in Madrid maintained an astounding equilibrium. For a brief and elysian period we vainly believed she was going to remain with us until she married; we did not doubt that she had every intention of remaining faithful to that moment of mutual vows when she said 'yes' and we took her for better or for worse. She had safely tucked in her little pasteboard trunk some virgin towels of violent pink and blue, bought at a sale—the beginning of a promising trousseau. She spent her holidays regularly with the same sweetheart. She both cooked and served the meals and, like an actress playing two parts in the same drama, changed from kitchen-apron to appear in the dining-room at the appointed time in glossy white. She sang the classics contentedly at her work; and this, more than anything else created a deceptive air of permanence.

The first intimation of what was looming came on her saint's day. She returned from a bull-fight and fair in a state of great excitement. I delicately ventured to broach the subject of

dinner (for it was late), but she flaunted a slip of paper at me and ordered me to read.

'Senorita,' she announced as she put on her apron absent-mindedly, 'the old woman in the slot-machine at the fair told me my fortune. Now, do *you* believe that just because I was born on Saint Saturnin's day, I am destined to a melancholy life?'

She stood planted in the middle of the kitchen. Knowing that her confessions usually terminated in a carbonized meal, I gathered up the reins and with a deriding 'no!' attempted to show her that I came not to ponder her destiny, but to discuss the dinner. But she was as elusive as a restive colt who refuses to obey the customary signals. Taking down a pot demonstratively and making a few preparatory gestures, just to cajole me into listening, she continued, apparently unable to stop herself any more than I was able to stop her:

'Now I don't really believe that an old woman in a slot-machine can really predict the future, do you?' she asked, turning her blue eyes on me nervously. And as soon as she had the

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semblance of something simmering on the stove, she burst into confidence.

Her sweetheart, a native of her hamlet—something like a cousin—had told her that very day (to chose of all days her saint's day!) that he had decided to return there and she must go with him. Now Saturnina hated the hamlet where she was born. She feared it, with a dark, superstitious fear; for she believed it was preordained that she end her life there.

'You know, *senorita*,' she told me on her knees once—her favourite posture when she was in a confidential mood as we went over household accounts, 'they say that the thing we fear most is our sure destiny.' So when her sweetheart told her point-blank that it was between the *pueblo* and him that she must choose, she answered that it was between the *pueblo* and herself he had to choose. He answered that he saw no reason for spending his life in an immense space like Madrid teeming with the empty faces of strangers when he could go home and take over his father's blacksmith-shop and live with people he knew all about. She tossed her head and left him angrily.

By this time Saturnina was so exalted with her story that I felt it would be discourteous to leave the kitchen. She was hysterically certain of her ultimate triumph. He would stay in Madrid—he would surely stay in Madrid! For the moment she was so optimistically sceptical of the old woman's predictions and her sweetheart's threats, that she even had some good things to say of her *pueblo*. She

drew me a picture of the village girls gossiping peaceably at the fountain in the square. Leaning on some of the softer memories of childhood, she described herself as a little girl: her mother had given her a broken jug to practise with in the back yard with the straggling chickens. And seizing an earthen water-jug, she demonstrated to me, with a willowy motion of the hip, the right way to hold it. For the grace with which a girl carried her jug to the fountain was one of the high social assets of the *pueblo*. With a condescending good-humour she imitated the peasants who said *chimenera* for *chimenea*; and with chuckling delight at her own acquired superiority she mimicked a peasant conversation. Then, changing her voice, now more determined than ever to become a real Madrilená, she continued her reminiscences with an affected and uppish little lisp. Taken against my better judgment by the becoming lisp—although I smelled something burning—I asked if she had been happy in her childhood.

'Happy? . . . Enchanted! I didn't know of any better life then!' And this encouragement on my part drew her into such a momentum of reminiscence that, before I knew it, she had taken down two pot covers, and clashing them together like cymbals, danced for me then and there a country *jota*. Marking time, she stamped her feet with a powerful rhythm on the red tiles; she danced with a charming dignity and abandon, as though she would stamp on her fate, triumphantly.

We had an unappetising dinner

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that night; and this kitchen scene was but a prelude to the events that now followed with volcanic logic. In her battle with her sweetheart all sense of time and place deserted her. I did not know the details of her affair, for I dodged the outpour of her confidences; but I could judge all the nuances of her amatory temperature by the meals she served. Possessing the temperament of a prima donna of the last decade and cooks of all time, she became so moody – in the heights at one moment, sulking the next – that I saw clearly there was no dragging her back to the sweet realities of our peaceful epoch. Although I dislike change, I finally steeled myself to dismissing her. But when I dismissed her from one door she simply reappeared through another.

These dismissals became as frequent as tropical rains or the uprisings that precede a revolution: after each one she passed through a period of calm. But the regeneration was transitory; each outburst left its indelible scar. We were like friends, who, having lost confidence in each other, see a thousand meanings in the simplest phrase and find the most innocent gestures fraught with suspicious meanings. Our relationship was a continual strain on both; our dissatisfaction was as mutual as our dislike for change; and, peculiarly enough, the more dissatisfied we became, the more remote seemed the possibility of a final rupture. A swift revolution would have cleared the air; and theoretically I realized the necessity of revolution. But my peace-loving nature rebelled against the idea of

revolution, and at the same time was continually irritated by the precariousness of the false domestic peace that we half-enjoyed after each dismissal.

II

Despite her pretty lisp and lithe dancing, despite her good taste in music and her quick wit, Saturnina failed to keep her sweetheart in Madrid. He left stubbornly for the *pueblo*; left her moping at the kitchen window. Each holiday, with all its famous Spanish sunlight, was now as desolate for her as a bleak New England Sunday – until she found another *novio*. For a moment she was excited. She had hopes and I had hopes. He was a strong man, almost twice her age; he had substantial virtues; he was a railroad employee; he knew how to hunt; he slaughtered pigs; he had a vegetable garden; he had prepared for his bride (with a smile that tried to seduce he told her 'whoever that may be!') a complete dining-room suite. It was a wonderful suite. He wished to marry immediately.

'But there is only one trouble, senorita,' she concluded one day wistfully. 'I don't love him.' She took a last longing look at the dining-room suite – and left him. She was too independent and innocent to marry for a dining-room suite, complete though it was.

Saturnina now fell into such an orgy of dejection that she became utterly unbearable. The good days were definitely over, but it was hard to admit it. Gone were those Monday mornings

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when she greeted me on the terrace, pointing to the rosy sky over the distant sierra, exclaiming respectfully: 'what a day for the wash!' Gone the days when she sang sonatas she had heard me play, as she polished the waxed floors with a light dancing motion of thighs and feet. (Her childlike voice, sometimes sweetly out of tune, was as blonde as her hair – so different from the black eyed cooks of sturdier texture who competed in the *patio* with loud, oily songs) Gone the days when the unfused *chiaroscuro* of her life was reflected in her proud walk – the Madrid walk she had learned on the Castellana, where she might have been taken for a nonchalant countess if she had worn a hat. Gone the days when she came to me bursting with poetry, begging me to take dictation:

'In a silver urn I thrust my hand
And drew my brother's heart.'

Her brother, who was fighting in Morocco, inspired her best rhymes. (And she would exclaim, as she watched me with wonder shaping the words: 'some day I am going to learn to read and write myself!') She had even been ambitious to learn English, which she considered a corrupted Spanish that she could learn to distinguish by force of listening hard. But gone were those inspirations and ambitions. She would never have a dining-room suite; she did not hear from her old sweetheart; her life was over.

At this time an English bachelor who lived in the adjoining apartment was expected to die. Not only death

was awaiting him, but everybody and everything about him was awaiting his death. My piano, in the room next to the room where he was dying, waited untouched; his servant who had been faithful for years, thought dreamily as she took the dog out for a stroll, of the death of her master – a gentle feeling, like the rustle of the trees under which she sauntered stirring within her at the thought of the rest she would take with the money he would surely leave her; the nuns who now permeated the hall with their holy unwashed odours, came daily to see if he had yet died (his money would give mystic leisure to many); the priest came with business-like regularity to see if the last absolution was finally needed. But with more impatience than any of these, Saturnina awaited the Englishman's death. Although she had no material advantage to gain by it, she followed his progress with as much passion as those who had – purely for her own moral satisfaction. For one day when the service elevator was out of order and the porter had told her to go up the main one, the Englishman, entering absent-mindedly, and seeing her vacillating in a corner of the elevator, jumped out, crying to the porter in a rage. 'Send her up. Send her up. I don't go up with servants.' Being a firm believer in divine justice as well as in blind fate, she now awaited his death, not doubting that he was being punished precisely because he had insulted a servant, and that servant, Saturnina.

She felt satisfied, avenged, when he died; but she took it as an omen. Just

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as some become more pious in sorrow, she became more superstitious. Now she remembered the prediction of the old woman in the slot-machine. Now she knew something was going to happen. She saw signs everywhere; presentiments lurked within her; omens prowled with feline stealth in the corners of her dreams. The recollection of the women of her hamlet who decayed before they blossomed, haunted her – for she saw her own future – a warning – in the senile women who stood at gaping doorways nibbling at the scant gossip provided by seventy souls.

She was afraid, afraid. Being endowed with that aptitude for philosophy I have always noticed in cooks – they have so much mental leisure to ponder in the kitchen – she evolved symbols and philosophies over her sad state. Just as for some philosophers war is not war but a symbol of something or other, so nothing was what it was for her – everything was something else. In an effort to trace the source of her sorrows she receded deeper into the past – she traced all her troubles to the day she entered our house.

The apartment on the seventh floor became a symbol of her downfall (why did foreigners always take high terrace apartments?). If she had only stayed in the last house where she worked (it was on the ground-floor and faced the street and every day her sweetheart passed: often he would be at the corner watching her – she knew it! – as she walked proudly ahead with her shopping-basket flung on her arm, pretending not to see him while feeling

him in every pore of her soul; turning her head high away from men who whispered *piropos* as she passed . . . Oh, how little she had appreciated her happiness when she had it!) then nothing would have changed. Life on this high terrace, far from people as though she had committed some crime, was not life; people seemed specks on a disinfected landscape – they passed voicelessly like rare shadows. She was hungry for the realities of the worker's quarters. There, voices of people buying things; the reassuring spattering of olive oil smelling the hallways; the children playing at toros and conquistadores and saints on the streets – that was life! Here the only way one could tell it was a day of fiesta was to look at the calendar. This was death (she was certain something was going to happen to some one); it was as quiet as her village here. She hated it all; but did not dare to leave for fear of taking the decisive step that would bring on the fate she was shaping with her own fears. She did not dare make a move; she did not know which way to turn to avert her eyes from the black cat that might at any moment cross her path. She was afraid to go out shopping and when she returned she was afraid to pass the porter, who, with his uniform, seemed as abstract, as allegorical as all the rest. She feared me and hated me. If I had not come to Spain, and so on . . . But she was afraid to leave me, on the strength of that often repeated Spanish adage: better is the known evil than the unknown good.

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Loathing the present, fearful of the future, she now lived entirely on the past and tried to draw me into it, imposing on me all her moods and confidences. I learned of how the first night in Madrid she had spent under a bed because she thought the rumbling of the tramcars was a winter thunderstorm – a phenomenon, she tremblingly decided, that occurred only in large cities; how, after the biblical darkness of the *pueblo* the twinkling nights frightened her, made her feel God would punish people for disobeying Him and turning night to day; of how she had not dared stop at the alluring shop-windows for fear of being taken for a peasant girl; of how the first time she went into the subway she had extricated herself from it at a distant and strange station . . . lost. She overloaded me with local colour; and told me so much of her life that I grew as tired of it as though I had lived it myself.

Her presence was obnoxious to me; she was slovenly, she left trailing after her an acrid and intimate smell as offensive as her untimely confidences. But the revulsion was always overcome by something she did or did not do that made me feel I was treating with a rare soul. I learned against my will of the early courtship of her sweetheart and of how his brother had asked her to marry him before she came to Madrid. The brother was secretary to the priest, he was a powerfully educated man; he could read and write and played the organ. But he was fat Did I think that sitting at a desk and writing

was a fit job for a man? – She called it a lazy fat and described his softness shudderingly. She would not marry him if he were the last man on earth. She would rather enter a convent (with a twinkle, she said ‘provided, of course, that there were monks!’)

Well, her own sweetheart was a mechanic and used the muscles God had given him; when he came smelling of grease the grease smelled good. Now he was in his father’s blacksmith-shop and she imagined him hammering and sweating with his muscles swelling as he worked away; she sat at the kitchen window and idealized him yearningly, until of her aching love, unrelieved by his presence, she evolved an overpowering and seething hate. Voluptuously fearful of her own telepathic powers, she wished him harm. But in love or hate, her thoughts were so constantly with him that she might as well have been in her *pueblo* in body and averted the catastrophe.

III

One day, returning from a six o’clock matinee and wishing to spend a quiet hour in my room before dinner, I sensed, almost before Saturnina opened the door, that she had some extraordinary confidence to impart. My nerves of sympathy were by now so fatigued that nothing she could have told me would have brought any response. At the risk of wounding her sensibilities, I walked through the corridor, unapproachably. She saw, as she followed me to my room with a

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resoluteness that matched my aloofness, that there was not one corner of my mind where another confidence would fit, no matter how astonishing it might be. But unable to contain herself – trying to catch my eye in the mirror, as she hung over me watching me brush my hair, pretending to ask some question about dinner (did I want it as usual at nine-thirty, or had I said ten o'clock?) she burst out with a strange elation:

'Senorita! My sweetheart killed his sweetheart!'

It was clear that my quiet hour was out of the question. I asked with resigned courtesy how it had happened. Yes, her sweetheart had killed his sweetheart. In her own drab hamlet had occurred a crime of passion as authentic as any one might read of in the very newspapers of Madrid. It seems that her sweetheart, discerning that the only effective cure for a disastrous love affair was to become immediately involved in another, had, with the glory of Madrid still fresh on his shoulders, become engaged to the richest girl in the hamlet. Saturnina's sister, who arrived from the country that afternoon while I was at the theatre, was the Mercury of the news. What would become of her sweetheart she did not know, but he was in jail and now would be as miserable as he had made her! She sang all evening; she prepared a savoury meal, a dinner made, as she would word it, 'with soul'. She asked me in a high-pitched voice if her name would be in the papers; she felt herself a heroine and imagined her name figur-

ing in one of the famous crimes of the twentieth century; she saw in her incited imagination the *pregoneros* walking down the village roads of Spain calling her name among the latest crimes in verse. In a perspiration of patriotism she saw the name of her hamlet glorified, one of the resounding names of immortal Spain; her native cousins would walk straighter, would not lose their teeth early. Even her sister, she said, seemed a different person, coming adorned as she had with such important news. Saturnina was going to get a job for her sister and make a real Madrid girl of her; but this was only a small part of the great dreams that sang in her head in the exaltation of hearing the first news of her sweetheart since they had parted in anger. She knew at last where he was, what he was doing; and it was divine justice that he was now as miserable as he had made her.

The next morning I saw her sister. Standing huddled in a corner of Saturnina's room – she had not dared go into the kitchen – she looked as though she had just arrived from some other planet – but scarcely from Mercury. She was undersized and dumpy; her dress, strangling her neck, reached down to her ankles and revealed some kind of unbelievable embroidered pantaloon. A huge frayed satin bow of unearthly gaudiness held two petrified braids tightly against her spine. Dazed with being on the seventh floor of a Madrid apartment-house, she stood in the corner as though paralysis had seized her. She tried to answer my

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greeting, but her answer rose to her throat and stuck there in an inaudible mumble

This apparition looked like nothing more than a materialized vision of Saturnina's fears. Saturnina seemed to wish to hide it, to stand in front of it, ashamed of seeing the bare soul of her hamlet exposed to me without the protection of words. She said with energy that her sister was really a good girl and would soon get used to Madrid. This same vivacity that she used in protecting her sister, she displayed without relief the next few days until I so tired of her cheerfulness that I asked her why she was so vengeful, why she gloated over her sweetheart's trouble. She looked at me without answering; for a second I saw on her face the expression of a disciple whose master had pointed out a new path of behaviour, a vital revelation of good manners. Then in self-defence she quoted a poet: 'I sing that I do not weep,' and went out of the room thoughtfully.

I was to witness the full effect of my reprimand the next morning. It was miraculous. She appeared with the breakfast-tray, sorrow personified. Her hair was dishevelled; her eyes as hollow as some Ophelia's; and all day she walked, or rather dragged about, in a tragic cloud. At the end of the week she looked so haggard that I hinted this was too much drama, that this was not quite what I meant, and that she might light the gas-heater and take a bath. She did not respond until I accompanied the hint with the

worn-out and always effective threat and told her that she must take a bath and turn a new leaf, or go. After her bath she came looking so seraphic, so elongated by a week's tragedy (she had shampooed her hair and was clean and blonde again) that, overcome by the artistic impression she created, believing my eyes instead of past experience, I told her I would hire a cook until she recuperated her strength. Saturnina looked at me wanly non-committal in the way servants do when for politic motives they do not wish to show gratitude; and, probably under the impression that her vacation started then and there, she was gone on the message all morning, sunning herself with the leisurely promenaders on the Castellana, in the full pride of having bathed.

The cook she brought with her was a sort of Celestina, and, aptly enough, her name was Celestina. She was an experienced, insinuating cook who loved to worm her sharp eyes and chin into all the corners of the house. Seeing an opportunity to practise the entire range of her talents without scruple, she concocted daily banquets that Saturnina served with great pride as long as the moral effects of her bath lasted. (It was at this time that my friends wanted to know where I had found such a wonderful maid – so little do we know of what goes on in other people's kitchens.) She came from the market daily with her basket revealing the feathers of some special game ordered by Celestina. My bills were quite normal until one day, like a

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sudden rise of fever in a patient who had been doing well, the accounts soared to a startling height. I frankly told Saturnina, who gave the account in a shaking inexperienced voice, that I would tolerate no such leaps on her part; I accused her not only of pilfering but of a lack of subtlety, and told her she was too obviously taking unbecoming lessons of Celestina. She did not seem impressed until I used the word *sisona*; then, seeming surprised that I had learned the word, she blushed dully and said she came of poor but honest people.

This was the beginning of the end. Of a very fluid nature, always willing to try new experiments of behaviour, easy to influence for evil as for good, she became the confused victim of Celestina. The excitement of her sweetheart's imprisonment had died down; the girl he had killed was not dead; later news had it that she was only wounded. The sparks of the crime had settled to a routine of wondering what would happen to him. If he had been given the verdict of the garrote, she would have experienced a soothing spasm of satisfaction; that would have been the climax that would have shaken her into a new life. But his living kept her from living; this dragging, dragging, dragging of news, and no news, and not knowing and almost knowing – this disappointment in crime, in publicity, in being a heroine, was worse than the desertion of her sweetheart. Her dramatic nature required a greater intensity of excitement; seeing that even crime was dull,

she snapped under the vanity of things. She stayed in the kitchen. And now Celestina, whom I had forbidden to leave the kitchen had her own way. She became self-appointed *ama de llaves* – her chief ideal in life. She got her relatives jobs at my expense; she hired a woman to do the weekly cleaning – she found me a laundress I had never asked for; she ran the house in the grand style. With all this extra service I had accumulated to help her, Saturnina fell entirely into the back-ground. I did not even trouble to discharge her any more. I simply paid her her wages and disregarded her presence.

IV

Impelled by a ceaseless cackle that sounded like a female social tea, I ventured into the kitchen. Saturnina was standing at the sink with a foot wound about an ankle, negligently washing dishes with a sullen rag. Her sister was coweringly wiping dishes. On a chair in the middle of the floor sat a country-woman from Talavera, her bundles of precious tapestries scattered on the tiled floor, her legs spread in deep comfort under her many petticoats, exuding an earthy smell that pervaded the kitchen. Celestina, the first to see me at the doorway, lifted her spoon in mid-air, like an orchestra conductor giving the signal for silence. The woman stood up respectfully; the sister shrank behind the dish-towel; and Celestina, turning back to her pot, stirred something with ingratiating

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concentration. Only Saturnina, seeing me take note of the dish-rag, remained standing on one foot like a malignant bird and tossed me an eloquent and bitter glance of defiance.

I told the woman I did not wish her wares; Celestina, that she could go immediately on finishing the dinner; Saturnina, who looked at me with surprise, so long was it since I had asked her to do anything, that she was to serve that evening and was to come to my room when she finished the dishes. Soon I heard the service door opening and shutting; a great undulating silence fell on the apartment, giving me a fore-taste of the time when Saturnina and her helpers would no longer be with me. Soon Saturnina herself shuffled through the corridors and appeared with her kitchen apron on, not even pretending to lift it to one side like a curtain, as had been her custom. This was the last sign I told her the news that was no news.

'I knew you were planning to discharge me!' she cried. 'I knew you were never really satisfied with me. Celestina warned me of this. Celestina told me she heard in the market square that you were looking for another girl long before she came here.' She lifted her eyes to mine suddenly and looked at me with an infinite hate. 'God, I wish I had never seen this house! All my troubles started here . . . I'm going to leave to-night—right now!' Her voice was stricken with remorse, with fear at taking a definitive leap, and she repeated against her own will: 'I'm leaving now. I won't stay in this house another minute.'

'Where will you go?'

'To my aunt's.' Calming down at the thought of the high social category of her relatives, she added loftily. 'To my aunt who has a grocery-store on the Calle de Toledo,' forgetting that she once told me she would rather starve on the streets than go to her aunt.

'Don't lose your head — the little you have left,' I advised. 'You had better stay until morning . . . and you may tell Celestina I will no longer require her services and she may return Saturday for her pay.'

But Saturnina would not have her scene spoiled, and bringing it back to its original tenseness, she threw back her head and declaimed:

'Senora, to-morrow you will deliver your own messages. I am no longer in your employ. I have been slaving for you long enough. Celestina is right: we servants always get the worst of it. I am your slave no longer. To-morrow you will open your own door,' she concluded with the triumph of a person who has irrevocably failed, and knowing he has nothing more to lose, expresses all his hidden feelings without reserve. How magnificent she looked as she expounded, with a revolutionary ardour irritated by her self-imposed idleness, the undigested ideas of social justice instilled in her by the Celestina! And she was fully conscious of her dramatic power, for she ran out of the room, making an exit so natural, so perfect in time, that I stood in admiration. But when she returned I had somewhat recovered

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from the effect, and angry at the vengeful insolence with which she had refused my advances to remain on good terms, I said 'yes' when she asked haughtily if I wished to examine her trunk before she locked it. In my anger I had only wished to humiliate her. But I was shocked when I saw the effect of my acquiescence. She turned livid.

I went to her room and bent over her trunk – over the sad little pasteboard trunk that flared the blood and sun of the Spanish monarchical flag. I picked up a few things, but, repelled by what I was doing – this was a gesture worthy of a customs official's clerk – I was about to drop them, when a familiar blue caught my eye. I lifted a cape-coat for which I had once asked and that Saturnina told me she had been unable to find.

She faced me in horror. As though tearing herself out of an anguished dream, she threw herself at my feet and cried: 'I'm not a thief, *senorita*. Don't denounce me . . . Oh God, this is the way I was doomed to leave this house – the old woman in the slot-machine at the fair knew . . . I'm not a thief. Nobody in my family is a thief. . . . You are going to tell everybody, aren't you? You are going to say I stole . . . I will have to return to my *pueblo* . . .' and here a neuralgic whine escaped her that fascinated me – it was so terrible and strange. I stood looking at her and she took my silence for acquiescence. She was certain now that I was avenging myself for her insolence, and burying her head in her hands broke into noisy sobs. In her

complete abandon her aesthetic sense was eclipsed; she wept without drama, without art; her tears spurted unhistorically from the very depths of her life; from the obscure depths of the life of her *pueblo*. These were no longer tears over the coat, over the lost job; she was weeping because her sweetheart had left her; because the women of her hamlet decayed before they blossomed; because she had lost her youth (she was already twenty-one) and because her name was Saturnina. Suddenly she lifted her stained knuckles and wiping her tear-drenched face, jumped up and recoiled from me, as though I were the author of her misery.

'I knew it,' she shouted hoarsely. 'Of course you are going to tell everybody. You'll publish it in the papers. You're planning to spoil my reputation and my sister's in Madrid. I'll never be able to get a job again. I will have to return to my *pueblo* . . . I never stole the coat, I tell you. I don't know how it got in my trunk. I've never stolen anything in my life.'

I knew that even if she had taken the coat, the virginity of her honesty was intact. How could I tell her this, make up for my silence; shout above her shouting? I had not worn the coat all winter; it was only through a capricious faithfulness to old things that I had asked for it. A sense of justice must have told her she would look a thousand times better than I did in it. (I could see her, blonde and graceful.) Perhaps she had even wished some substantial token of her days in

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my house – I would have appreciated this sentiment. I was secretly glad she had taken it and my conscience ached because I had never thought of giving it to her, knowing how the blue would have brought out the blue of her eyes. She did not hear me assure her – she was wringing her hands, sobbing – and she would not have believed me, so certain was she that this was her fate (oh, she recognized it!) that this was precisely what had been predicted. Nothing I said could counteract the predictions of the old woman in the slot-machine.

Saturnina saw me put back the coat into her trunk. She seized it and threw it from her with superstitious fear. It was no longer a coat – it was a symbol of the final fall. ‘I don’t want the coat. I don’t know how it got into my trunk. I never stole it . . . Oh God, why did I take it?’ A bewildered look came into her eyes – she must have looked like this when she got out at the wrong station in the subway. She glanced about the room; threw a few more things into the trunk and locked it; then dragging it into the hallway, sobbing all the way and wailing, ‘this is the way I leave your house. A thief! A thief!’ she published her misery through the halls.

‘Keep quiet, you little fool. Shut the door, you are making a draught. I told you no one will know.’ I saw eyes peering from the peep-hole in the next apartment.

But Saturnina had neither ears nor

eyes; she could not believe me; she had to shape with her fears the very thing she feared. She had to leave in this heart-breaking way because her heart was broken. She ran down the narrow service steps for a taxi to take her trunk. She ran into the dark night to escape her fate into the arms of her fate. And I never saw her again.

At the end of that year I was throwing away the kitchen calendar when I noticed some pencil lines on the sheets. I examined the whole year and found sketches made by Saturnina; some childish enough, others unawaresly and elaborately obscene. Then I came to a leaf that arrested my attention. Three women were standing at a doorway. How Saturnina had ever observed enough to say so much in so few lines, so startlingly, is beyond explanation; but there they were, the old women of her continual nightmare, standing gossiping on the milkman’s calendar on the page of the month of June (the month of Saturnina’s birth).

I left for a journey to the south. When I returned I asked the porter what had happened to Saturnina. He told me she had gone directly to her hamlet and married her sweetheart’s brother, the secretary of the priest. ‘And her sweetheart,’ I asked. ‘What happened to him?’ ‘Well,’ said the porter, ‘he is serving five years in prison here in Madrid.’

Nine London Pictures

by G. W. Stonier

I. Nuits Blanches

THE curtains may be drawn or furled, the window left open or shut. But there is really no choice: light and sound must come in. Only towards dawn, the sleeper who has lain in bed watching, listening and following the threads of reverie will prepare his room for the quietude which he has shrunk from during the night.

They are nights of turmoil! The silence holds innumerable noises, as a pool into which one has gazed will reveal a shoal of fish in its depth; (how far away) a bell rings, steps wander calamitously down an alley, the fife-note of a train startles; and on the ceiling the dull radiance made by a streetlamp is trampled by countless passing lights, which move across gaily in bright slats, and slant away, leaving the room empty for the return of its tombstone of light. Then, let the cinematograph of the past begin! But always there is the interruption of more stragglers, the last train is followed at a distance by another, and yet another. So it goes on; immediate sounds are

rarer and may finally cease; but from this centre of silence (stirred by one's own breathing!) the radius widens to places where animation persists, and across the town, scratchings on its perimeter, the carts joggle in to market, an engine shuffles on wheels that fail to grip, and the boat that has followed the tide gives rasping snorts while the sailors prepare to shoot lazy ropes at the wharf.

The tombstone on the ceiling is invariable, and yet each moment it changes; now it seems duller than rock, now fluid as quicksilver; or the eye, seeking relief elsewhere, is met by shadowy reds and violets. Night is garish with all the colours of day; and London, in the full activity of every street, rises up in the silence. Not only Love knows itself by absence! Pick up the empty glove; visit the theatre where daylight peeps down on the sheeted stalls; read again the letters or the diary which you wrote ten years ago!

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II. Nuits Blanches (continued)

THERE is the lamp-post, below my window; and near by, leaning towards it, a tree which has grown up from a square of earth in the pavement. I see them so plainly as I lie in bed – the two together. The lamp-post stands rigid; the tree, inclining, raises a hand with fingers outspread to the sky. Of the two this is the tragic figure – lopped, leafless and blackened by smoke; its one arm has grown in an attitude of torture, and the fingers, with ugly nodes at each crook, are extended only by painful effort.

The lamp spreads its skirt of light – but I see it better by day. Bright green and yellow emphasize the fluted length; four brackets, holding the head, bulge outwards like a ruff; and then the glass noddle with its single eye, on

top of all a fool's cap or conical snuffer Element of droll horror – the stark gallows' arm; yet on this children will happily loop a swing. Many of their games have the lamp-post for centre, at dusk its light will droop mysterious shadows over the faces held together in confidence; and the tree, poor living thing, is left to the visitation of dogs.

In summer, of course, the tree enjoys its incomparable light graces, and shakes down the confetti of its leaves. Seeing it, people look at the sky, where an aeroplane perhaps is cruising, and think of visits to the country and long bus journeys on July evenings.

The lamp-post goes unnoticed, for it is only one of the people.

III. Nuits Blanches (continued)

IROSE early and went out. It was dark. The cold made me walk quickly, and as I reached the end of the road a shower of sparks flew out of a brazier over which an old workman sat huddled. The wind had blown his moustache sideways. He looked at me without moving. Round the entrance of his shanty were lozenges of tar the size of barrels, great rolls of wire netting, and lanterns which hung rattling on trestles.

I walked through empty streets in which a lamp was whistling or a cat slipped back into darkness. At one corner a piece of newspaper cart-wheeled slowly towards me, and then was caught by a gust of wind which slapped it noisily against a wall, where it remained clinging. A dull light was showing already in the windows of houses facing east; some flecks of snow drifted down uncertainly, and a crystal touched my hand. As

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day appeared, the sky seemed to darken.

A pretty icing was laid on roofs, in corners, and along the rims of fences. Snow was falling more heavily. The faces of people hurrying to work, head down in the wind, were pale as though lit by waxen footlights. They trod gingerly, and each kept his eyes fixed on the heels of the person in front of him. Two clerks, sheltering under a statue which wore a nightcap, looked impatiently along the road for a tram, and walked a few steps together or made figures in the whiteness with their toes. 'All this will have to be cleared away,' said one, 'that means work for somebody.' The other waved his newspaper: 'It will cost us a pretty penny!' They darted round an old woman to get the last places on the tram.

In the suburb straggling lines of marchers, who were joined by others as they left their gardens, converged on the station. More and more faces passed me, gliding mournfully, bobbing up like ducks, and all looking the same way with a strange mixture of intensity and indifference. They were the faces of invalids, pinched and dark-eyed, over the sheets. Voices came from a distance as though across padded rooms, and a door near by shut quietly. My eyelids seemed to press down on me like

the sky which brooded over the houses with their white roofs, glistening eaves and warm lighted windows.

I stopped on a canal bridge to watch the flakes descending, like a bead-curtain gently shaken, into the water. Along the parapet, some yards from my elbow, a gull alighted, twitching its tail and making quick top-heavy movements on its red spindles. Then it screamed and flew off, and as I passed the spot I saw the scratchings and star-marks on the snow.

Everywhere there were black fences, yellow puddles, and ice-crusts on the leaves. Vehicles dashed and splashed for the drier parts of the road. People were warming up and discussing the weather as something that belonged to them; they would point to a corner where the drift was deep, as though it were a favourite flower bed; while an occasional early Pickwick was to be seen trotting along spotless avenues, looking faintly rouged and inviting snowballers.

As the sun shone out, and the hollows of snow took on blue reflections, I stepped into a bus and went home. I was half-asleep, my hands were livid and my eyes dead. The workman standing in the middle of his encampment, now an arctic dump, watched the smoke of his clay rising, and wished me a good morning.

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IV. The Funeral

IT was one of those rainy mornings, devoid of interest, when the hours are like journeys across an interminable plain. The mist had penetrated by doors and chimneys into sitting-rooms, and beads of moisture hung on the veils of women bending towards shop windows. By twelve o'clock the sky seemed to have come down in a single cloud which grazed the puddles.

Two processions in black approached by converging roads; met; hesitated; advanced; and intermingled. There was hopeless confusion. For a moment the hearses were alongside. In his coffin each icy senator raised himself on an elbow, looked across and bowed without smiling to the other.

'Bad weather,' the first said in a whisper.

'It might be worse,' replied the other.

'Your tie is crooked – you don't mind my mentioning this?'

'But I notice you have a button undone.'

The first it seemed, had given orders that he should be buried in patent-leather boots – a fancy acquired during courtship; beside him he wanted his hat, his cigar-case, opera glasses, and a yellow cane. These were purloined by his butler, who had gone off to the races.

The other had asked that his funeral should be as quiet as possible,

without music, flowers, or mourning. His procession was much the longer one. Relatives had come up from all parts of the country for the occasion, and his coffin was piled high with lilies, roses and chrysanthemums – the gifts of those who imagined that by spending a little, as one might buy a ticket in a lottery, they would increase their chances of inheritance.

The horses started forward, the mutes who had been wrangling climbed back to their seats, and a shudder passed through the frame of each corpse as it once more lay rigid.

The larger procession went along main roads and through the most important neighbourhoods, although there was another route, passing rows of shabby houses, which would have taken half an hour less. Outside the Town Hall there was an uproar. A voice from one of the back coaches thundered: 'By God, we are following the wrong coffin'. The faces of mourners with black hats and white handkerchiefs appeared in windows, protesting, horrified and excited. It was debated what should be done; some were in favour of walking home as an example. Three gentlemen from the fifth coach, who had been plying a flask and entertaining one another with stories, stood on the pavement and called loudly for an inquiry. Everyone agreed that the day had been spoilt.

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V. Trust Your Eye

As I walked down the steps from that door in Bond Street, the clear sunlight on the awnings, the reflections in glass and metal, the movements of the early shoppers, made me pause for an instant to admire. What a canvas the sun can paint with its wash of light! Then I turned so that the warmth was on my face, and at once I stood in a fiery chalkpit, and walking towards me were negroes, tall and languid, who stepped on the heels of their long shadows.

Yet we are right to trust our eyes, though they deceive us at a hundred moments during the day. There is, without doubt, a *common sense* of the eye which does not belong to ear, nose or touch

You felt a bullet brush your cheek? No: either you saw the gun that fired it, or you heard the explosion. A bee might have touched you. Instinctively you raise your hand to feel the skin; but if there is moisture, the eye reports that it is blood.

In farces, a deaf man is often the maypole round whom conversation jogs; a blind man in the same position would be intolerable. And as for the unlucky wretch who cannot smell that his house is on fire, or cannot tell the difference between ginger and pepper,

his case is so obscure that he is not even a subject for jokes.

Yet these other senses, which we do not trust, and which operate so secretly in us, are overwhelmingly strong. In love, the eye makes the first advance, but afterwards, it is the ear, the hand, the nostril that command

I sat in a concert-hall listening to a performance of Mozart's thirty-ninth symphony. It was played faultlessly and with a depth of spirit rare in the interpretation of our modern conductors. Yet I failed to enjoy the music wholly; or rather I failed to discover in this performance the Mozart I loved well. Why? It occurred to me as I walked home that there had been a woman sitting near me who smelt strongly of a scent I disliked. She had not, however, caught my attention at the time.

My ear had enabled me to ignore the farce, presented by the eye, of rows of men who sat in black coats, acquiescently nodding their heads, sawing guts and blowing tubes; but my nose, which I had imagined to be asleep, had gone off on the trail of a cheap scent, and so destroyed the peace of all faculties!

G. W. Stonier

VI. Streets

CERTAIN streets haunt the mind. We are drawn by no artifice, the lives of the inhabitants may be indifferent to us, but a lonely magnificence, such as exists in an old tree or a mountain, forces us to return. They are landmarks apart from the highstreets, the cinemas, theatres and shops where crowds gather. They express, not the vision of an artist, but the mood of the city that has built them, driven them for commerce, steeped them in its smoke and mists.

The storehouses along wharves, the great chimneys and factories which overhang a row of cottages, are centres of countless lives; and yet the workmen who pour out of them in the evenings leave no imprint. There may be fresh faces, a new line of photographs may be pinned on a locker, but from the street we see only the majestic shape, the opaque windows with their broken panes, the shoulders of engines moving slowly. At night these hulks rise dark and tenantless in the sky.

A warren of lanes runs along both

banks of the river; stairs, hollowed by use, lead down to the water; massive arches, black walls on which a lantern throws its greenish light, confront the traveller.

Further south there are the long bare streets, ill-lit and almost deserted, which twist like giant alleys between the walls of brewers' towns and railway sidings. A pinnacle, a crusted battlement, crowns the distance; high overhead a passenger bridge connects two buildings across the road. There are no front doors or windows. From a locked gate exudes the odour of tar, horsedung or sour vats. The silence of brick and stone deepens. Far off, the traffic murmurs like an unending drum. And each corner reveals another gorge, at its base a dim lamp, with perhaps a figure walking.

And then the tram! Thundering, it swings into view, and comes on hissing, nod-nodding towards you, swan-like, a gondola gemmed with lights. People are sitting inside. You are near a broadway, filled with noise, lights, and faces.

VII. Roadmenders at Night

A RAILWAY bridge framed the scene. I saw them, beyond a loop of lights, in the hollow: a tiny cinematograph. Blue and white splinters gashed the darkness; under the arch, a party of workmen were standing in half-circle; and one of them, masked and shuddering, pressed a blazing

drill which made the tramlines ring.

I felt the throb at my feet; and in the distance I saw this articulate frieze.

Past me, quick as swallows, a flock of cyclists wheeled down the hill, slanted into the picture, caught light an instant, and were gone.

Nine London Pictures

VIII. The Old Beggar

THERE is a type of beggar who reflects the public conscience. At the end of a line of chalk drawings, sunsets, grottoes, you see the living face from an oleograph; a grease-curl is combed down on the forehead; the eye has a dog's appeal. His attitude, as he sits leaning forward from the wall, chinking pennies and alert to catch a straggler, is submissive, pitiable and contemptible.

To force charity he should be disabled – a leg, say, or an arm gone – but not badly mutilated, or women will walk by in horror; he must be genteelly shabby, but not in rags – hardup, but not of course obviously hungry; he must *do* something, chalking or embroidery, and he must do it badly, if the superiority of the donor is not to be affronted. – In short, he must be pimp to his own wretchedness.

Disgust rather than pity is roused in any intelligent man by such spectacles; but the professional beggar has learnt his lesson; he knows the appeal of the bible pictures and the hoarding.

Winter throws up on the pavement, like boughs on the ice, a variegated army of beggars, tramps and unemployed men – who, of course, take no part in this charade. Among them are figures who seem to have outlived

tragedy and to have passed into a timeless existence of their own. You see them at night in their long coats like dressing-gowns, bending over a dustbin and plunging both arms into the refuse, while a theatre opens its doors across the way; and in the early hours an old tramp, leaning under the weight of a sack, and scarcely able to crawl, turns northward in the middle of London, to begin his long march for the country. The premonition of death must be strong. Is there perhaps a stage in the lives of beggars when they pause and turn away from the crowds they have followed?

An old man stopped me on Vauxhall Bridge. Crowds were hurrying south in the dusk. A wind blew up from the river, where chimneys squirted their smoke into the sky; but overhead, among ragged clouds, there was a light patch of green, and this gave a pallid beauty to the faces round me. The old beggar said in a low voice, hardly to be heard above the traffic, 'Alms for the love of God'. He did not address me, or any of the people that hurried past; he was not himself walking, though the right foot was advanced; he stood like one of those effigies that do duty on a medieval bridge, weatherstained, accoutred, and stretching a hand towards the passer-by.

G. W. Stonier

IX. The Excursion

THE excursion train was so full that I had to stand in the corridor. We had left the town and were running between banks where the sun flickered down through the pines. The wake of the engine fluttered a scarf over the window, but at times the breeze changed, and I would see a ploughed field hard as rock in the sunlight, a smooth hill turning like a great peach, the rich grass of a riverside meadow. While I stared at this spinning landscape, with that mixture of delight and weariness which one experiences on railway journeys, a man whose face I had noticed on the glass of the compartment behind me came out and stood at the window. We watched two cows and a farm girl. He pulled at his big moustache, and then turned to me with the words: 'I've just had the biggest smack in the eye I ever had. I've lost a beautiful boy.' The station crashed past: a leaf ripped from a book and sent flying. I turned to him. He was almost brutally ugly; his face had the heaviness of a room full of large plain furniture; and when he spoke, the words were dull, methodical and slow. His son, he explained, had died the week before. He gave me the history of his illness. 'The third in the back row,' he said, showing me the photograph of a cricket team, and he rammed a match between his teeth. I could only respect his grief at a distance. Obviously some comment was expected; but the one question in my mind was, 'While you are standing here, do you mind if I have your seat?'

An Experiment with Rhyme

by Bonamy Dobrée

IT is never easy to know what is happening to one's self while reading poetry, and harder still to know why; but since love of a thing leads one to want to know all about it, the temptation to probe into the why and wherefore of poetry is irresistible. But it is very rarely that one can arrive at solid conclusions, especially as any conclusion taken too far leads to absurdity: what follows, therefore, is to be taken, not as ideas worked out, so much as suggestions thrown out.

Rhyme, that old handmaiden of poetry, has lately come in for some hard words. It is not merely because rhyming is a 'base and modern bondage', hanging up the poet's imagination and cooling his divine fire, though that is a strong enough attack. And on the other hand this frictional effect is often to everybody's benefit, as Dryden shrewdly remarked: rhyme is useful so long as it produces compression and not puffing. A further attack is that the jingle distracts the mind while titillating the ear, that, in fact, it keeps the reader on the surface. Some may take a contrary view, and say that to Coleridge's 'known effects of metre' may be added 'the known effects of rhyme' (supposing them to be

known), as conducing to a higher state of tension in which communication, not of the word alone, but of something beyond the word, inexpressible by the word, can be achieved: that though the couplet may be fatiguing, the occasional rhyme, as in the English seventeenth century 'Pindaric' Ode, or in Patmore, flicks the mind agog by keeping the ear alert. You can argue for rhyme being meretricious, or for its being the final grace, as the last, most subtle division between art and life: but as such arguments depend, it would seem, merely on individual taste, they tend to be inconclusive.

To most people one sort of poetry is more satisfying than another: to all of us probably, one sort is preferable to another at different times, in varying moods. We may like to be plunged into profundity, or to be borne up on wings. It is possible that the second form may demand rhyme, the first be hampered by it. Take away rhyme from 'Full fathom five', or add it to the invocation to light in *Paradise Lost*, and both would seem rather foolish. But apart from this question of obvious extremes, would it not be possible to see whether in any given instance rhyme would improve blank verse, or the taking away of

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rhyme might improve a poem constructed on a rhyme scheme?

If we can find definite instances, we may be able to come to some clear conclusion about rhyme, perhaps judge for what sort of communication it is essential, or at least valuable: where it interferes with communication, or fails to add anything: whether, perhaps, it may add an air to an otherwise valueless thing, or on the other hand, betray it altogether. I have tried, therefore, to carry out the alteration in a certain number of passages, chosen haphazard as far as this investigation is concerned; they were originally selected for quite a different purpose by Mr. Ivor Richards in conducting practical criticism. A certain amount must be allowed for change of meaning, a certain amount for change in length of vowel sound: but on the whole I venture to think that the experiment suggests – not proves – certain conclusions.

I begin with a passage from Bailey's *Festus*, once a very popular passage:

Life's more than breath and the quick
round of blood
'Tis a great spirit and a busy heart;
The coward and the small in soul scarce
do live
One generous feeling, one great thought;
one deed
Of good, ere night, would make life longer
seem
Than if each year might number a
thousand days
Spent as is this by nations of mankind.
We live in deeds, not years, in thought, not
breaths,
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.

We should count time by heart-throbs.
He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts
the best

Now let us see what happens if we put rhyme in, preserving the meaning and the metre. Sometimes, I admit, the word is not wholly suitable, but I would ask the reader not to pay too much attention to the meaning in the rhymed version:

Life's more than breath and the quick
round of blood
'Tis a great spirit and a rolling flood,
The coward and the small in soul scarce
do heed
One generous feeling, one great thought;
one deed
Of good, ere night, would make man
longer praise
Than if each year might number a
thousand days
Spent as this is by nations of mankind.
We live in deeds, not years, not breaths,
but mind,
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs.
He's most zealous
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts
the best.

To my thinking, imperfect as the rhymed rendering is, it is more satisfying than the blank verse. But let us pass on to the next passage, without making up our minds about this, or indeed about any of them, until the end. Here is a lyric of Christina Rossetti's:

Gone were but the Winter,
Come were but the Spring,
I would go to a covert
Where the birds sing.

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Where in the whitethorn
Singeth a thrush,
And a robin sings
In the holly-bush.

Full of fresh scents
Are the budding boughs
Arching high over
A cool green house:

Full of sweet scents
And whispering air
Which sayeth softly:
'We spread no snare.'

'Here dwell in safety,
Here dwell alone,
With a clear stream
And a mossy stone,

'Here the sun shineth
Most shadily;
Here is heard an echo
Of the far sea
Though far off it be.'

Now we will take the rhymes out. I do not think the ideas or images are in any way spoiled:

Gone were but the Winter,
Come were but the May,
I would go to a covert
Where the birds sing.

Where in the whitethorn
Singeth a wren,
And a robin sings
In the holly-bush.

Full of fresh scents
Are the budding twigs.
Arching high over
A cool green house:

Full of sweet scents
And whispering breeze
Which sayeth softly:
‘We spread no snare;

'Here dwell in safety,
Here dwell alone,
With a clear stream
And a mossy rock,

'Here the sun shineth
Most shadily;
Here is heard an echo
Of the far wave
Though far off it is '

My own feeling is that here the rhyme has added a little, but only very little. Others may not agree. My next instance is from Donne, where I have had a little to alter the meaning, but not, I think, seriously.

At the round earth's imagined corners
 blow

Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go:
All whom the flood did, and fire shall
o'erthrow,

All whom war, death, age, agues,
 tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance, hath slain, and you
 whose eyes
Shall behold God, and never taste death's
 woe.

But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a
space;

For if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace,
When we are there. Here on this lowly
ground,
Teach me how to repent, for that's as good
As if Thou hadst seal'd my pardon with
Thy blood.

At the round earth's imagined corners
 sound

Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go:
All whom the flood did, and fire shall
destroy,

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All whom war, death, age, agues,
 tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance, hath slain, and you
 whose looks
Shall behold God, and never taste death's

But let them sleep, Lord, and me ^{pain}mourn a
while;

For if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace,
When we are there Here on this lowly
earth.

Teach me how to repent, for that's as well
As if Thou hadst seal'd my pardon with
Thy blood.

I do not myself feel that the sonnet has been at all injured, except where I have had to injure it by substituting a word which does not carry the emotional weight of the lost one; e.g. 'pain' for 'woe'; or using an abrupt word such as 'looks' for the trailing 'eye'. But we are to consider whether Donne would not have produced as fine a sonnet without rhyme as with.

Here is what seems to be a most revealing example from Studdert Kennedy ('Woodbine Willie').

There was rapture of spring in the morning
When we told our love in the wood
For you were the spring in my heart, dear
lad,
And I vowed that my life was good.

But there's winter now in the evening,
And lowering clouds overhead,
There's wailing of wind in the chimney
nook

And I vow that my life lies dead.

For the sun may shine on the meadow lands
And the dog-rose bloom in the lanes,
But I've only weeds in my garden, lad,
Wild weeds that are rank with the rains.

One solace there is for me, sweet but faint,
As it floats on the wind of the years,
A whisper that spring is the last true thing
And that triumph is born of tears.

Now let us see what happens without rhyme.

There was rapture of spring in the morning
When we told our love in the dell
For you were the spring in my heart, dear
lad,
And I vowed that my life was good.

But there's winter now in the evening,
And lowering clouds in the sky,
There's wailing of wind in the chimney
nook
And I vow that my life lies dead.

For the sun may shine on the meadow lands
And the dog-rose bloom in the hedge,
But I've only weeds in my garden, lad,
Wild winds that are rank with the rain.

One solace there is for me, sweet but faint,
As it floats on the winds of the months,
A whisper that May is the last true thing
And that triumph is born of tears.

I wonder if everyone will agree with me that the rhymed version of this poem did at least satisfy the absurd appetencies that it arouses; whereas in the unrhymed version the poem is completely dead. It has vanished.

For a last trial, here is Byron, in
The Island:

A little stream came tumbling from the height,
And straggling into ocean as it might,
Its bounding crystal frolicked in the ray,
And gushed from cliff to crag with saltless spray:

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Close on the wild, wide ocean, yet as pure
As fresh as innocence, and more secure,
Its silver torrent glitter'd o'er the deep,
As the shy chamois' eye o'erlooks the steep,
While far below the vast and sullen swell
Of ocean's alpine azure rose and fell.

And here the whole poem seems to be changed by taking out the rhyme: it has in fact, become a quite different poem, but I myself do not think that the new version is a worse one:

A little stream came tumbling from the height,
And straggling into ocean as it could,
Its bounding crystal frolicked in the beam,
And gushed from cliff to crag with saltless spray;
Close on the wild, wide ocean, yet as pure
And fresh as innocence, and more serene,
Its silver torrent glitter'd o'er the wave,
As the shy chamois' eye o'erlooks the steep,
While far below the vast and sullen surge
Of ocean's alpine azure rose and fell.

Let us now see if we can draw any conclusions; or rather, I will draw conclusions in the hope that some will have agreed, or will agree with my judgment: for since the conclusion must depend upon the personal feeling behind the judgment, and not upon argument, I can draw it only for myself. The assumptions I shall work on are that (1) Bailey's poem would be bettered by rhyme: (2) Christina Rossetti's poem hardly needs it, though it is perhaps slightly improved by it: (3) Donne's does not need it at all; (4) Kennedy's is nothing without it; (5) Byron's needs it if it is to be what it is, but is a no worse, if different, poem without it. What is to be gathered from this, if anything?

The first, the obvious, result, seems to be that the better the poem is, the less it needs rhyme: and that a bad poem can palliate, even disguise its badness by being in rhyme. But we must be careful of extremes. Rhyme may make a silly poem even sillier:

To see a man tread over graves
I hold it no good mark;
'Tis wicked in the sun and moon
And bad luck in the dark!

whereas though *Xanadu* is a very fine poem indeed, it would be definitely injured by taking out the rhyme. Two considerations then, offer themselves: the one that the virtue of rhyme may depend (a) upon the kind of poem (judged as communication); and (b) upon some other quality of versification, e.g. or perhaps altogether, rhythm. If something of the sort can be made out, this inquiry may be profitable.

Let us look, then, at the effect of the rhymes. In the *Festus* extract rhyme makes the effect more definite, more striking. The rhythm by itself is not emphatic enough to drive the meaning home: and here we have a meaning that is definitely communicable by words, as opposed to the sort of meaning which can be conveyed by poetry but is incommunicable in prose. There are, therefore, two possibilities; that rhyme can supply the necessary impact where the rhythm alone cannot do so: or that rhyme is an advantage in the poetry of statement, to give an effect of finality (cf. Dryden).

Christina Rossetti's poem loses

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just a little, I think, when the rhyme is abstracted: but the strong rhythms, the consistent imagery, and the emotive associations – all of the same not very profound sort – keep it a good poem without the rhyme. What this adds seems to be a sort of lightness, the wings we feel we need if such a poem is really to make its full effect and not become a little vapid or languorous. Lyric poetry we feel inclined to say at this stage, needs rhyme. What, for instance would ‘When love with unconfined wings’ be, or ‘The fountains mingle with the river’, without the rhymes? On the other hand it is possible that the effect can be got by other means. Ask people whether ‘Now falls the crimson petal, now the white’ is in rhyme or not, and most will answer that it is

The Donne needs no rhyme: the strong rhythm, the deeply emotive words, the succession of ‘imaginary’ images (as opposed to the ‘real’ ones of Christina Rossetti: contrast ‘imagined corners’ with ‘mossy stone’) do the work by themselves. But here again the question arises: is this result due to what is communicated (the subject matter) or to poetic technique? Perhaps both. All we can say is that it would appear that poems which take us deeper into life, rather than bear us above it, do not need the wings of rhyme. But the same result is obtained with ‘When to the sessions of sweet silent thought’, a less profound if no less emotional sonnet. Both, however, produce the mood of contemplation; neither attempts to impart delight in existence.

Kennedy’s verses, with their cheap sentiment, their vague expressions, their lolloping prosody, are, of course, thoroughly bad but when rhymed they have something: they may momentarily deceive the unwary, untrained reader. The fact seems to be that rhyme can add a certain jolliness, the jolliness of songs, even of good ones, I mean, such as Shakespeare’s, and something of the sort to a number of good lyrics, a quality which can often add backbone to redeem a poem from mawkishness. Try, for instance, ‘Music, when soft voices die’ without its rhyme. This is not, therefore, to say that rhyme is spurious. Let us look at the Byron extract. If you grant that the unrhymed version is as good as the rhymed one, but different, you have to decide where the difference lies. It is a difference of substance, not of quality. What rhyme has done has been to make the passage gayer, lighter: without the rhyme it is more contemplative.

What, so far, can we conclude? I say ‘so far’ because an investigation of this sort should be made over a large number of poems, poems of statement, lyrics, metaphysical poems, and so on, and tested over a period of time in both their forms (as I have done these examples without varying much in my views) It would seem that rhyme, except where the rhythms and emotive values are too strong for it – as with Donne – can do two things; add finality (though finality *need* not demand rhyme), or add wings. The expected sound relieves the reader of having to attend to places where he does not wish

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to attend, or at least can leave a part of his listening faculty free, so that he can be more receptive of other things in the poem. In bad poems, however, the expected sound is all that there is to gratify the reader's expectation. On the whole it seems possible to say that metaphysical poetry can do without, whereas the lyric needs it. Perhaps rhyme is a kind of yeast, which lightens the load and makes it more

digestible: there is no point in making a metaphysical poem easy. The very austere will shun rhyme, as will those with a proud high stomach: weaker mortals will find it an aid: but at the same time it is an aid that should be regarded with suspicions by the reader: to change the metaphor, it may be a shining layer of gilt to cover over a very unsatisfactory piece of gingerbread.

Growing like a Tree

by Eric Linklater

*It is not growing like a tree,
In bulk, that makes men better be.*

BEN JONSON

I

IN late December, in Italy, I met a German refugee called W—. He was a writer, a disciple of Thomas Mann, I think, a delicate creature, tall, with a charming courtesy, and a gentle eager nature that fluttered, like a linnet in a cage, in the inescapable sadness of his exile. He and his wife were living in a tiny villa perched among olive-trees on a small cliff with its back to the morning sun. Even in fine weather it was a cold place till the afternoon, and in stormy weather the sea made a great noise in a cave that pierced the cliff below them. W— said one day, 'The

sea is terrible. When there is a tempest I cannot sleep. I lie awake all night listening to it — *boo-hoo, boo-hoo!*'

About a fortnight ago I woke early one morning and heard the sea boo-hooing in the undercut rocks like young giants who had been thrashed by giants, and I thought, 'Poor W—! he hasn't had much sleep to-night.' A few hours later I heard that he was dead. He had died suddenly during the night.

He was buried on a bitterly cold day. The townspeople and contadini who came to the funeral — they were saying to each other that he was a poet,

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an artist, some said he was a musician – held their bunches of flowers close in their hands to shelter them from the tramontana that spoilt them as soon as they were laid on the earth. Three or four German friends stood by the grave, and one, who wore a black glass over an empty eye-socket, made an oration in which he said that W—— had fought for Germany in the War, and after the War he had lived for Germany, for literature, and for Communism. I had not realized he was a Communist. He was so lovable a man that I had never associated him with any militant political doctrine.

Because of his death I thought of the Nazis and read of their activities with a new bitterness, for whatever the doctor's verdict said, W—— died of Hitlerism. Not for the first time, but now with a keener dislike, I thought of the meanness of the Nazis' brutality: a hundred and forty years ago the French revolutionaries sent to the guillotine their hundreds of splendid aristocrats; but the Nazis, summoning their strength and massing their lawyers in debate for the better part of a year, beheaded a half-wit boy; Mussolini shattered his enemies, as Panurge might have done, with the enormous ridicule of purgative oils – but the Nazis practise on their interned enemies the slow torture of a rancid Prussianism. It is indeed a loathsome régime – and then, suddenly and very unexpectedly, I discovered in it an aspect of splendour, and

curiously enough that aspect was revealed in *The New Statesman*.

I read there an account of Germany's foreign policy. The article began with a discussion of the German-Polish agreement, and went on to discuss the new *Drang Nach Osten* which envisages a conquering march through the Ukraine, through White Russia, to the Crimea, to the Caucasus, and even, it is said, to Transcaspia and Turkestan. Hating as I did all the ways of the Nazis, I could not restrain a gasp of admiration for this magnificent project. It was Tamburlaine all over again – and Tamburlaine is Marlowe's poetry.

My memory, sliding down the slopes of time, then went back beyond the gorgeous week when I first read Marlowe, and I remembered myself as a very stupid, muddle-headed, romantic boy, anything between twelve and fifteen years old, who spent a great deal of his time poring over maps and passionately desiring to multiply the red areas that meant British Sovereignty. It seemed to me then that Rhodes was the last of the heroes, and – already conscious of ignoble qualities in my nature, but not yet despairing of their cure – I used to think with gratitude of Clive's unsatisfactory boyhood. I would search the map for spaces in which to plant new Union Jacks. The Entente Cordiale annoyed me because it made impossible, or at least impolitic, any idea of reconquering the conquests of the Black Prince, and I scarcely felt able to repair George III's imbecility in losing the American colonies. But I used to count the un-

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countable islands of the South Seas that did not belong to Britain, and think how desirable it would be to command a swift cruiser and with Devonian tactics snatch an archipelago

or two and add them to the Imperial Crown. The Rajah of Sarawak, if not a full-sized hero, was at least an admirable model, and so was Raffles of Singapore.

II

It is seldom *The New Statesman* recalls one's boyhood. But this article on the foreign policy of the Nazis brought it back, pimples and all. And then, with the astounding clarity that accompanies the answer to a simple riddle, I perceived the rationalizing explanation of the Nazis' desire for Turkestan, and my adolescent yearning to plant Union Jacks in New Guinea and the Marquesas. Imperialism is simply the homologue of growing-up. The building of empires is simply the world's method of putting on its first long trousers – for though the Hittites built an empire a few thousand years ago, a few thousand years is but a fraction of the time required for a biological or social-evolutionary experiment, and little real advance can be looked for in so short a time. the Hittites were infant prodigies and died young.

Empire-building is, of course, only the largest and most spectacular indication of this natural desire to simulate growing-up by growing big. The department store, the mammoth newspaper with its boast of a huge circulation – 'Yah! I'm bigger than you are!' – the skyscrapers of Chicago (though these have an aesthetic justification), the modern state that tries to make a cor-

porative giant out of little individuals – these things and many more are homologous to the lanky sprouting of a boy or the addition to a tree's circumference of its annual ring. But they have no intrinsic merit, and they will disappear when the world is truly an adult world. There is no point in growing more when one is grown-up.

If there is any lesson at all to be learnt from the last twenty years, it is surely that bigness has few virtues. The last war was a big war – so big that no one could manage it: no one could win it, and it was almost impossible to lose it. Old theories of strategy, built on the handling of small professional forces, were useless. The armies grew larger and larger, and no one knew what to do with them. Company commanders, it is true, were often very efficient people; brigadiers were rather less efficient; divisional generals were constantly at fault; and army commanders were seldom able to control the movements of their troops according to plan. Efficiency diminished as the machine grew greater. And after the War financial and commercial undertakings of all kinds continued to prove this: banks, shipping companies, match factories, petroleum companies, and a hundred other concerns increased their deposits,

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production, turnover or what-not until, like the Allied armies in the field, they became quite unmanageable, and finally outdid the statistics of their mushroom wealth with the size of their casualty lists.

The insoluble economic problems of the modern state are largely due to the unmanageable size of the modern state, that is full of contradictory desires and antipathetic interests. You can't raise the price of beef without offending the butchers, and there are so many butchers in a civilized country that no politician dares offend them. You can't raise the producers' price without cutting the profits of half a million middlemen, and cutting their profits would reduce their purchasing power, and throw shirtmakers and golf-caddies and restaurateurs out of work, as well as diminishing the

Chancellor's receipts from income tax. You can't raise the tariff on French potatoes and claret to help Australian vigneron and English market-gardeners without the French docking their coal imports and so depriving colliery shareholders of their ability to buy English new potatoes and a bottle of Emu burgundy. Mr. MacDonald's government – or M. Daladier-Herriot-Boncour-Chautemps' – or Mr. Roosevelt's – can no more help one section of the community without hurting several others, than General Blank could order the 1st Brackens, the 1st Loamshires, the 2nd Canutes and the 5th Sessex to take Mont Jemenfiche without running the Brackens into uncut wire and leaving the Canutes in a wholly indefensible salient. The bigger they are the harder they fall – and they fall more frequently.

III

Size, then, reduces efficiency. It also reduces the political amenities: that is to say it increases the possible minority and therefore the possible discontent. There is, let us say, a big country called Magnolia with an adult population of 4,000 all enjoying the suffrage. In Magnolia it is possible to find a political minority numbering 1,999. But ethnologically there are four distinct peoples in Magnolia, and after some discussion they agree to separate and set up four independent states. Each of these states has an adult population of 1,000, all enjoying

the suffrage. The largest possible minority in each of them is 499 – and so the largest possible total of minorities in Magnolia becomes 1,996, a reduction of three on the old figures. That is to say, in the four small new countries it is impossible, at the worst of times, to have so much political discontent as, on the worst occasions, there was in the old empire of Magnolia. (I assume a democratic principle of government, of course.) In other words, every individual in the little new countries has a larger chance of contentment, a larger chance of getting his wishes

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attended to, and is naturally of increased value to the state, and so to himself, in proportion to the numerical decrease of its population.

Let us continue the story of Magnolia. Magnolia had a neighbour, a peace-loving country called Diffidentia. Now, in the old days Diffidentia was always afraid of the great power of Magnolia, and so taxed its people heavily to pay for armaments and a large military establishment. But when Magnolia divided itself into four, none of the new little states could afford to buy anything more than machine-guns and other strictly defensive weapons (The Magnolian Armament Factory, indeed, went out of business, and was reconstituted as Superior Household Plumbing, Ltd.) Seeing this, Diffidentia also disarmed, and the consequent reduction of Diffidential taxation brought increased domestic prosperity, and Diffidentia was able – it never had been before – to import excellent mahogany furniture, admirable applejack, most nutritive ground nuts, and very imposing marble tombstones, the speciality productions of the four quarters of Magnolia, to the great satisfaction of Diffidentia and to the great profit and contentment of the four states of Magnolia.

Now I do not want this story to be simply a politico-geographical idyll. Difficulties must not be forgotten – and it happens that Magnolia's other neighbour was a truculent *arriviste* republic called Malevolenz. When Magnolia split into four Malevolenz adopted a bullying attitude, made

impossible demands, and delivered ultimatums of the most alarming kind to the four new states, in which for some time there was considerable trepidation. But fortunately Malevolenz also had neighbours: the great empires of Gargaphie and Drax: and in obedience to the new political movement of Benevolent Dissociation (as it was called), Gargaphie and Drax had recently split up into a dozen small principalities, all of which bought much of their household coal from Malevolenz.

The four states of Magnolia took their troubles to Geneva and found ready sympathy from the representatives of the Gargaphie-Drax principalities; being themselves representatives of small states they were naturally sympathetic with the difficulties of other small states. As a result of their conference all the Gargaphie-Drax governments sent simultaneous notices to Malevolenz, stating that unless the ultimatums to the four states of Magnolia were immediately withdrawn, they, the independent peoples of the late empires of Gargaphie and Drax, would cease to buy coal from Malevolenz and would burn Irish peat instead. On receipt of this information Malevolenz, grumbling a good deal it is true, withdrew her ultimatums within forty-eight hours.

Nor is the story ended. At one time – but this was a long time ago, when Europe was first discovered by the Americans – Magnolia, Gargaphie, and Drax had been much visited by American tourists, who delighted in their individual cultures, their sturdy

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peasantry, their colourful dresses, and their ability to remain different from the rest of the world. But in the course of time Magnolia, Gargaphie, and Drax had succumbed – partly as a result of American influence – to the modern craze of uniformity, and had gradually become almost indistinguishable from any other part of the world. The Americans then ceased to visit them, for they could find cinemas, soda-fountains, 40/- suits, and Birmingham jewellery in Kansas City, Minnesota, and Oakland, without the discomfort and expense of a preliminary sea-voyage. Gargaphie, Drax, and Magnolia thereby suffered a serious loss of income, and the Americans suffered an even more serious loss of interest in the world, which, they said, was becoming very flat and tasteless.

But a few years after the Benevolent Dissociation there reappeared in the new states of Gargaphie, Drax, and Magnolia all their old traditional costumes, their native cultures, their own songs and dances and forms of local government, and a new and stronger life inspired them. Every citizen in those new little states was of more importance than he had been when a multitude of fellow-citizens obscured his identity; and because of this resurgent individuality the arts flourished, and flourished with a fine disregard for the fashions of neighbouring states. In this way the theatres in Eastern Gargaphie had dramatic theories entirely different from those in Western Gargaphie; the painters in Southern Magnolia used a wholly dif-

ferent technique from that of the painters in Northern Magnolia; and the poets of Drax-in-the-Mountains all composed exquisite lyric poetry, while those in Drax-by-the-Sea brought forth enormous and magnificent epics.

Because of this infinite variety within their boundaries, Drax, Magnolia, and Gargaphie became the favourite resorts of tens of thousands of English, American, German, and Russian tourists, who brought prosperity with them and returned to their own countries with infinite gratitude to God – and to Gargaphie, Drax, and Magnolia – for this revelation of the manifold talents and delicious eccentricity of mankind, and straightway split up their own ridiculously large and dull countries into little interesting ones, with the result that the world became a place where, though other ills certainly persisted, no one ever complained of monotony or boredom or had nightmares about imperialistic steam-rollers.

This, I think, is a pleasant story. But, unlike many pleasant stories, it is not quite so impossible of realization as most people will believe. The chief obstacle to its realization is that a world of little countries, with proper machinery to control the flow or flight of capital, would give rich men fewer opportunities to become millionaires, and millionaires no chance at all to become billionaires. And the desire for riches is at present an influence even more dominating than Stalin, Mussolini, Kemal, and the people behind Hitler. But the passion to get as much

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as you can and get it quickly was not always humanity's dominating motive: the doctrine of the fair price held considerable sway in the Middle Ages, and the pride of the craftsman has done more for the world than the financier's pride will ever do. A 'change of heart' is not impossible in the world – it would come more easily if a happier phrase described it – and a change of heart can bring about any kind of revolution.

At present, however, I admit that 'little and better' is not a popular slogan. I tried to say something of this sort when I contested East Fife as a Scottish Nationalist, and my careful elaboration of the benefits of small nationalism cut no ice whatever. Scottish Nationalism is, of course, for the island of Britain, the first and obvious step towards the ideal map of the world, which, with so many colours and boundaries, will look like cloisonné work.

Perhaps propaganda for smallness

in the schools (in the guise of history of course), should be the preliminary campaign. Without much opposition – for it seems a harmless motto – one might get Ben Jonson's lines painted on classroom walls:

'It is not growing like a tree,
In bulk, that makes men better be.'

And then, instead of empires and empire-builders, the history-books might tell of little peoples trodden underfoot, and empire-martyrs.

Poor W— and his funeral in the cold! Had Germany been a land of little states, did Germans wish to be whole men and women, not numbers in a conscript line, he might still have been alive, still writing with infinite care his delicate searching stories, unravelling with gentle fingers every obscure and half-seen motive, constructing his webs to catch the reader and a glint of sun.

The Nuncio

by Herbert Read

*So our virtues
Lie in the interpretation of the time*
CORIOLANUS, iv. 7

I too was present
one of a tufted mat of men
gathered under a high coffered ceiling.
I stood apart, making an image
for the dense throng of heads
hard, carapaceous
inhabited by a thousand eyes
crouched there like a scarab body
on each side the receding
columns of porphyry and gold
outspread like tense wings.

My musings were interrupted
by a fanfare and a sudden cry of heralds.
In the ensuing silence
all eyes were drawn
to the slowly opening doors.

First to enter were two attendants
carrying a regalia of astronomical instruments.

Starr was the name of the one we waited for.
He entered presently, removing his tiara
with the economical gestures of a man entering his own house.

A short squat man
his hair powder-blue
on his white shaven skull.

The Nuncio

He spoke immediately
into the ear of the microphone
he spoke immaculately
like a dancer
speaking into the ear of his partner.

'We may not have long to wait
not so very long.
There has been despair: the first shock of defeat
cost us more losses in faith than in men.
Now we must build again
repair our broken parapets
dig fresh communication trenches.
The lines are cut; runners must proceed with messages.
At all costs we must make contact
assemble our scattered units
issue orders for a counter-attack.

Against tyrants there is only one weapon
anciently the pen now the microphone.
From the high tension of our minds
must radiate such measures as the situation demands.
From Moscow Princeton Berlin and Paris
from London Tokyo Rome and Buenos Ayres
from every city school and cloister
we must gather to avert disaster.

Our structures are of steel and glass
their subtle struts not obvious
we build with space in space
and by ingenuity produce
our aerial houses high towers
our winding stairs —
all is in light
above-board and ought
to win the approval of the masses.

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But by those ignorant of stresses
our architecture is dismissed
as at best a jest.
Any demagogue can raise a wind
to break the logic of the mind.

In the last extremity
we can no longer employ geometry.
Floodlights of emotion
must be thrown against the recessed terraces
the rectangular towers and bleak buttresses —
the external form of our adventure.
We must design with brighter colour
borrowing harmonies from children at school
and especially on an outer wall
cast a warmth that will appeal
to those unable to measure steel.

On our highest towers we might erect
flagpoles on which to inflict
pennants streamers and any pied
pattern that catches the colour-avid eye.

Rays of light and yards of bunting
take the place of verbal ranting.
Never to the eye deny
what the mind can amplify.

Then we must provide some stairs
obviously connect the various floors.
The lift that shoots from first to fourth
will only be a cause of wrath
to those long accustomed to creep
from first to second step by step.

Such ascending and descending spirals
will serve eventually as treadmills
or as a substitute for war.
The lift can thread the spiral core.

The Nuncio

We must not forget the fire-escapes
we must decoy suspicious dupes
with the prospect of continual safety.
We must not treat this matter lightly:
the mouse the mole and the rabbit
have habits different from the robot.
Rodents range darkly in a fire-proof underground
not meeting fire
they have no fear.
But our enemy like an ampersand
lives inevitably between —
between land and sky, between earth and heaven.
He must connect, and if he leaves the earth
must be assured of a safe path
back to his natural element.
A building without a fire-escape
he regards as a dangerous man-trap.

No need to multiply instances.
But we must reduce the area of glass:
we have avoided darkness
our structures are transparent —
only the skeleton visible and adamant
lies like a net embedded criss-cross.
This would fail as an ambush
therefore blacken the glass
fill in the mesh
with soil and cement
any opaque element
so that their eyes cannot penetrate
partitions or discover remote
repetitions of plane and space.
Their eyes do not wish to pierce
floor or ceiling, nor traverse
limitless horizons; eyes
follow nose
fixed and unilateral in their course.

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The strategy must vary
according to the class and climate
but normally provide a dormitory
where every night
your prisoners may sleep;
otherwise their weary footsteps will distract
the occupiers of the inner cells, who conduct
their meditations in despite
of earth's diurnal revolution, and the want of faith and hope.

Thus in various ways by various devices
sacrificing appearances preserving the reality
evading force by the use of mental agility
guarding in an inner redoubt under lock and key
the lost lineaments of goodness truth and beauty.'

Starr paused, his head erect
his eyes fixed on some abstract
conception of the universe and man.
His audience was very still, and when
Starr spoke again
his whisper barely reached the microphone.

'In a vision we have seen
the world one, all men one
a single confederation
spreading from ocean to ocean

reason supreme
a flame
served by a few priests
the world obeying their behests

the evil and the ill
tamed and all
spiritual corruption
given absolution.

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Reason like a lily
fed by sense and feeling
blooming eternally
ruling
all the flowers of the field.'

Starr ceased
and we who had listened
suspended in stillness
surged like a sudden tide
towards the dais where he stood.
But Starr
checked our rash
onward rush
held us with his lifted hand
and to us gave this last command:

'Each to his cell:
the individual
is the pivot of our plan.
God only speaks to those who pray. .
Action without grace can never win.
Therefore seek grace in meditation: employ
your mind and senses in the worship
without which we are without hope.
Reason prevails
against all symbols;
symbols are idols of mind's darkest level:
live in light immune from evil.'

So Starr left us

and then in single flocs and flakes
we broke apart and left that hall
each intent, each mind full
of plans, prognostications and strategics.

The Burning Cactus

A Story by Stephen Spender

I

IN the cactus field high up above the town one can hear that faint roaring which steams always from a great city, but on a fine day in the late summer of the South has another sharper and yet droning prolonged note, like the heard motion of a dynamo.

Blue. The huge southern port lies beneath the field, flat and accurately mapped, fringed by the high and less clearly defined suburbs of exotic houses with Moorish towers and glass domes and chiselled terraces and with lemons and lively green fig trees growing in the strongly scented coloured gardens. Beyond the markings of ships, cranes, and docks in the port the sea is immense, and, as the sun westers, becomes lost in the dazzle of sky and horizon. On the grassy path slightly shadowed by a wall at the edge of the cactus field, on one such afternoon a young man lay. Above him he could see the mountain side scattered with a few small newly built flat-roofed houses, and older houses of very rich people. On the mountain crest he saw a church, a restaurant, and a model airship from which people might see the view. Above that was the intolerable sky.

The young man wore no jacket, but grey flannel trousers and a shirt also of a lighter grey colour; its open collar revealed his graceful neck. He had a fair complexion and long fair hair, good features, fine eyes and sensitive nostrils. His hands were shapely and yet very tactile, in contrast to his lips, and now one hand was pressed to his head whilst the other clutched at his thigh, giving his whole body an expression which violently excluded mountain, port, sea and sky and drew attention only to the speaker's own personality.

'I hate it! Why did I come here to be tortured by this man and his household? What does Meyer want from me? What good does it do him that I should suffer? Why did he ever take me away from Berlin where I had good work and was happy? I tell you, Roger and Pearl, he came into the hotel in Berlin where I was working and he smiled at me. He didn't say one word, but he must have learnt who I was from the head-waiter. A few days later the head-waiter told me that the man from No. 14, Herr Meyer, offered me a job to look after his flat in Barcelona if I would come here at once.

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It was December then – only to think of it, nearly a year ago – it was bitterly cold in Berlin, I hated the work in the hotel and my brother and sister-in-law were exhausting me dreadfully. I love them, I love them very truly but they can be worse than difficult sometimes. So I wired that I would leave for Barcelona the next morning. How should I have known that Meyer could treat me like this? I thought that he must have particularly liked me and would be kinder and more personal than the management of the hotel. I ask you, what harm had I ever done to him? Why should he drag someone whom he had only seen once in the hall of an hotel right across Europe in order to torture him?

‘My poor child,’ said Pearl, stroking his hair. ‘You ought not to think about it so much, you ought to let your brain rest sometimes. Poor Till.’

‘It’s no use trying to comfort me. It’s no use, I tell you; something’s broken in me. All those years in Germany after the war and having to earn a living for my whole family – one would have thought that was bad enough, and then this happens on top of it all . . . If it wasn’t for you and Roger, I should be mad by now; yes, I should be mad, really. . . .’

‘I hate it all,’ he continued, looking vindictively down at Barcelona, ‘I hate Barcelona, I hate Meyer, I hate the Spanish, I hate the endless hot weather . . . Give me a cigarette.’

‘Another?’

‘Yes, that exactly shows the state I am in. I can’t leave off smoking. I

don’t know why it is, but I must *taste* something all the time. It’s no use trying to stop myself. I’m quite powerless.’

He took the cigarette hungrily, and then paused with the match transparently burning in the sunlight, whose heat seemed to admit the flame to have no contrast. Then suddenly he fixed his attention on a little prickly cactus that grew near the path and was removed some inches from the cactuses in the field.

‘The life I lead here is like that cactus. It’s hard and bitter and cutting. Stupid, useless thing, why does it grow here? Now everything I hate I see in this moment concentrated on that cactus.’

With a gesture that was playful, yet entirely devoid of humour, he set the match to one of the cactus leaves. He watched the leaf burn intensely and the fire spread to the rest of the plant, and then all three became aware that a wind was blowing from the side of the mountain down into the hot valley. For suddenly a branch of fire sprang along the grass from the isolated plant to a further plant that belonged to the whole field.

Till sprang up and tried to pull the second cactus away from the rest with his hand. But even as he did so a rivulet of flame was blown straight across the breadth of the field; and this rivulet had other gullies.

‘It’s no use, Till,’ said Pearl in a strained voice. ‘We must come away. The only thing is to run.’

‘*Run?*’ exclaimed Till indignantly. Roger spoke for the first time:

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'Come away, you blasted little fool,' he said, 'or you'll be getting us all sent to prison.'

He pulled him away from the cactus. For a moment Till buried his face in his hands and gave a sob. Then he ran with the others along the side of the field and then down the hill

As they ran down the baked bare path away from the field, they passed an old man with a stick, who stared to see three such extraordinary-looking people running in the heat. Till with his beautiful, desperate expression. Pearl with her heavily painted face and dyed hair uncovered. And Roger with a constricted white face, and wearing plus-fours and a beret. Behind them the fire now spread over the whole field. In the huge sun, natural generous tongues and leaves of flame did not rise in rich colours threatening the sky. But under the glare the fire spread with frenzy like a small crystalline hot almost opaque inundation which clutched at the ground and ran to devour new fuel. Above this small lake of fire was a waving sheet of transparent film which distorted and yet hardened everything seen through it. Above that film were thin black smoke and wandering lifted smuts and fragments.

Without looking back the three foreigners ran down the hateful path past the flat-roofed suburban houses. They came to a main road and took a taxi; Pearl ordered the driver to drive to her house. She sat back and sighed:

'My God, I'm glad that's over.'

'It's not over,' said Roger sharply. 'Someone saw us.'

Till did not speak. He sat opposite his two companions in the taxi, with his chin pressed against his hand, whilst he stared away from them, out of the window. They passed through long loud dazzling reassuring streets where the people were occupied with their own lounging and did not know about the fire on the hill. When the taxi stopped Pearl and Roger got out. Till looked round and said, 'Tell him to drive on to Meyer's'.

'Shall we expect you to come round this evening?' Pearl asked. Till did not reply.

When the taxi had disappeared, Roger said:

'By God, I wish we had never met Till.'

'But, dear, can't you see that it's not his fault?'

'It isn't the fire I object to so much, Pearl, it's his damned impertinence. Never one word of apology, nothing. On the contrary, he seemed offended, as though we'd set the thing on fire to annoy him.'

'Yes, I know, I know. But that's all a part of his illness. We can't measure his suffering. It is too great for us.'

'Well, there are limits to what we can put up with.'

'I know there are. But I like him.'

Meanwhile Till had moved to the more comfortable seat in the taxi and there he half-lay in a state of unthinking hopelessness. I, I, I, I, he thought, but without formulating any sentences or seeing anything except the white

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mineral intensity of that twisting sheet of flame. He rapped the glass of the window violently, for the man, with typical Spanish lack of consideration for one's feelings, was going too far. The taxi stopped. Till counted out some money, pushed it into the man's hand and swept away without troubling to rebuke the man or to wait for him to say 'good-day, thank you', or to swear because the tip was small.

II

Meyer's flat was one of the largest and certainly far the most modern house in Barcelona. It was built in the new German style with a glass shaft down the whole side of the house to illuminate the staircase and the lift. Meyer's was the top flat of all and had a roof garden for sunbathing. The flat was built in two stories round a central hall. Till had a small clean room with metal walls rather like the cabin of a luxury liner: this room was on the lower floor. When he first lived there he had had a beautiful view of the mountain side from his window; but now his room was already darkened by a new building which had been put up in front of it.

As soon as he had shut and locked the door of his room he uttered a loud sigh and flung himself on to the bed. 'Oh God, again! Again!' he exclaimed, laying his hands on his stomach. Then he turned over on his side and drew his knees up to his chin. He had a tearing pain in his stomach, and his chest over his heart ached with a tired unrelenting

pain that seemed a comment on his consciousness of continual unhappiness. He shut his eyes and in that moment wished intensely to die, not on account of the pain in his stomach, but to escape from the tired feeling of his heart. He lay thus for some seconds, which seemed so long a time that he realized, that by attempting to rest he could escape from nothing and only made time seem longer. He rolled his head round and looked at the clock, catching a glimpse of his face in the glass, with the satiny hair in rich disorder. It was already twenty-to-six. Meyer was going out to-night and he wanted a light supper very early. As he thought this, Till heard footsteps pass his door; he knew at once it was the young Swede, known as Conrad, who was Meyer's secretary. He clenched his fist and jaw, and his whole body grew rigid with hatred.

When he heard a door slam and the footsteps disappear, he got up, brushed his hair, examined his face closely in the glass and looked at the picture of his mother which stood framed on the table by his bed. Except that she had dark hair, her features were exactly like those of her son; moreover, she sat with one arm resting on her knee, the hand clutching her elbow and her chin resting on her other hand in exactly the attitude which was most typical of Till. He then went upstairs to the kitchen. From the peg on the kitchen door he took down the long jacket of white canvas in which he worked. Wearing this, he looked efficient, pliant, hygienic, as modern as an advertisement for a vacuum

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cleaner. He made the mayonnaise and poured it over some cold fish, and then he sliced pieces of cold hard-boiled egg, with the delicacy of extreme loathing.

The violent gentleness with which he worked betrayed his anxiety about the fire. Supposing it ran further down the field, leaping over the wall, and caught the next field and so set light to the orchards on the mountain side? It might easily set fire to a house, or it might be blown along the side of the hill and then set fire to the convent. There was sure to be news about it in the papers, and when the old man who had seen them running away read his evening paper he would report them to the police. Of course there would be no chance of his not recognizing them.

Damn Pearl! Damn Roger! Why had they insisted on going there this afternoon? If he had been alone he would not have lost his head, he would have climbed *up* the hill and then crept away unobserved. As a matter of fact, if he had been alone, he would not have gone out at all this afternoon, but would have drunk coffee at the Royal; and then the particular combination of circumstances which had led to the fire would never have occurred on another day. (*Or would they?* he lightly wondered.) Why must Roger wear that eternal beret, why did Pearl never wear her hat, why must she dye her hair and paint her lips that colour? Of course, simply in order to draw attention to themselves, and this time like hell they had succeeded. He would get into trouble simply on their account.

He laid the dining-room table and

at half-past-six he went into the simply furnished but comfortable hall where Meyer, his guest, and the Swedish boy, Conrad, were drinking sherry. He told Meyer that supper was served. He bowed slightly as he quietly said this, and spoke exclusively to Meyer. He did not even glance at Conrad. Then he withdrew and walked up the back-stairs to the kitchen whilst the other three walked up the carpeted stairs through the hall to the dining-room. As soon as he heard them take their seats, he went into the dining-room to serve the meal. As he took the plates round he never once looked at Conrad, but all the time he was aware of him, he imagined his brown curly head leaning forward over the food as he concentrated with a frown on what he was eating, and at the same time, with knife raised, with forced but amused attention followed Meyer's conversation.

Meyer lowered his whole standard of conversation, even when Conrad was not there, to Conrad's level but even then Conrad understood very little. To Till there was something very irritating in Conrad's serious attempts to be amused. Still more was he exasperated by Meyer's deliberate, imposed stupidity, for by instinct he realized that Meyer belonged to the class of intellectual snobs. Meyer's social life was lived in the company of his French pictures, English novels, German books of philosophy and Japanese pornographic engravings. Till understood that he really appreciated these things, and that the monocle, the endless obscene jokes, the long morning hours

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in bed, the extreme cold politeness, the sun-bathing, the vigour that preserved his appearance as if to the command of a whip, so that although he was a man of fifty there was not the least sign of muscular collapse in his whole body, were all a performance; they were a wall which at some time in his life Meyer had built round himself. It had never changed.

As the meal went on, Till's white and mannered contempt for Conrad spread to Meyer himself. He heard the guest, who was a young German new to Barcelona, attempt to show his appreciation of Meyer's pictures by discussing an exhibition in Paris which he had recently seen. He was also interested in philosophy, and noticed the books in Meyer's library. Meyer ignored all his remarks about art and philosophy, so at last the guest decided to discuss the weather.

'It is terribly hot here, to-day, isn't it?' he suggested.

'Hot? Hot?' repeated Meyer, and then with the expression of someone who makes a private joke, he turned to Conrad. 'Are you hot this evening, my dear Conrad?'

This silliness had a nervous effect on Till, rather like the pain from his stomach which also ringed his chest and heart. Every remark the young German made, Meyer seemed to take up, examine, discover a double meaning in, and present it with polite bantering obscenity to Conrad. Till served at table whilst he listened to the machinery of glinting knives and forks and Meyer's imbecile conversation. Meyer seemed deliberately to be with-

holding the life in himself from them all. At the same time Till sometimes felt that Meyer's behaviour was peculiarly directed at him: for the cold smile filled him with a despairing conviction that he himself was in some sense inadequate and had profoundly failed Meyer.

Because he was fenced in with hatred for his two companions, and also by the terrible visionary memory of the fire, Till had scarcely noticed the German guest. But as he served the sweet he felt the stranger watching him, and then he saw his eyes reflected in the glass of a dark picture. Conrad and Meyer were squabbling and the stranger sat there silent and forgotten. In that moment of his host's complete and puerile preoccupation the young man did not merely glance at Till but his eyes, reflected in the glass, seemed to understand him. A smile of almost religious ecstasy lit Till's face, and he raised his head so that his features were illuminated in the glass beside the other one's eyes. Till trembled, until his delay seemed perceptible, and then returned to the table to serve the course. When he served Meyer, Meyer looked up, meeting his eyes for a moment, and said: 'You have done us well to-night.' Then he turned to his guest and said, with a smile: 'I am very lucky to have someone as good as Till to look after me.'

In Till's brain the printed letters of this short sentence assumed huge proportions. They became the cruellest thing Meyer had ever said to him. He had let his guest know he was their servant. Till angrily dismissed the

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newcomer from his thoughts, and again began to worry about the fire.

After supper he lay down until he was sure that the others had left the house. Five minutes later he himself went out, called a taxi, and directed the driver to the end of that road nearest the cactus field. He had dressed himself for the evening with Roger and Pearl. He wore a double-breasted jacket of grey flannel with a silk handkerchief in the breast pocket, and a gold chain hung from his wrist. He was very agitated and he sat forward in the taxi, looking out from side to side.

Barcelona showed political signs that Spain is now taking its place in the truer, commercial sun; the late light streets were full of crowds, and policemen with rifles and smaller excited groups of people, which occasionally held up Till's taxi. He saw in a very clear, exasperated vision the complete unimportance of these disputes, and it provoked him that they interrupted his movement. When one reflected on the chaos of political life in his own country, these people seemed like enthusiastic children tasting cigarettes and wine for the first time. He realized the uselessness of everything except explosive individual feelings, which shot one like an aimless but hot rocket across an expanse of waste in which the sun was cooling and the world running down and corruption like a moss covering the edges of reality.

At last the taxi stopped. He jumped out and ran panting up the track, now cool and seeming wet with dusk.

He reached the cactus field, and

there was not the faintest sign of any disturbance to the white colourless dusk that lay large along the side of the hill waiting for the night to relieve it with transparent coloured depths and brilliant stars. The landscape was bald mud and grass, occasionally marked with peaty clumps of trees and cactus, or the straight lines of buildings where the first lights mildly shone. For one feverish moment of utter heavenly unreality he sincerely thought that the fire was only a dream and that it had never taken place. He drew closer and with ghostly hand touched the ground as he leaned over the single plant that was divided from the rest of the field. Then, with a sick feeling, he saw that it was charred, and he apprehended the irrevocable truth of something that had already happened for four hours and would not cease to have happened. He turned, nailed as it were to the event, and walked slowly away from the field. But when he had left the field relief flooded over him, for he saw now that in a sense nothing really had happened: that is to say, nothing that mattered or could have serious consequences. With a sense of joy he ordered the taximan to drive to the house where Pearl and Roger lived.

III

'The fire is over: there is nothing, my dear, nothing.'

When Till was in his very good mood he would speak English

'Nothing? What do you mean? How do you know?' asked Roger.

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'My dear little Roger, because I have just been there. I have been working at Meyer's and then when I was finished, I have taken an auto and I have seen that now there is no fire. It is no more.'

'Thank God, thank God,' exclaimed Pearl. 'Oh, my God. I have been so worried! What an afternoon, my God!'

'Yes, what an afternoon, I could have wrung your neck, Till. You have no idea how upset Pearl has been.'

'You would have wrung my neck, my little Roger? Oh no, I will not believe it. Have you been "to Hamburg" this afternoon then?'

'You should not talk like that in front of me. I am shocked,' said Pearl, grinning.

'We don't compete on Thursdays,' said Roger. 'The young American lady has made friends with a leader of the Catalonian Parliament, and every Thursday they go "to Hamburg" together in the next room all the afternoon. Pearl and I can't bear to compete.'

The room was dingy; a large bed took up half of it. As they talked they sat and leaned on this bed. Over the bed, by the door, was an electric light switch which was painted exactly the same colour as Pearl's lips. The wall-paper was arsenic green.

'Are you hungry?' asked Pearl.

'Oh yes, I am very hungry. I have eaten nothing; nothing since before the fire.'

'I will make tea,' said Roger, getting up.

When they were alone, Pearl said:

'There's plenty of room now,' and she lay on the bed. Till sighed and did so too.

Pearl touched his hand and said: 'You know, it's nice to see you happy for a change'

'Happy?'

'Yes, you are happy now just for a minute or two, aren't you?'

'Pearl, please don't think I'm the sort of person who's always unhappy,' he said in his complaining voice. 'On the contrary, I'm usually too gay, too light-hearted, too irresponsible if anything.'

'It's nicer to see you when you are happy. You seem able to get outside yourself more. When you're unhappy you look quite a different person. It's a funny thing to say perhaps, but sometimes you look like a primitive savage, or a hunted animal. Your eyes gleam and your voice seems to groan as if it were trapped somewhere at the back of your head.'

'I tell you, I'd be always happy if it weren't for this man. Why does he torture me like this, what does he want from me? What good does my suffering do him, I should like to know? But he's not the worst even. After all he's an inferior person who is not even worth bothering about now - he has passed that. Yes, a person of education, taste, talent who has definitely chosen the company of people who are in every way beneath him. He's done with, he's destroyed himself already, but the person I really hate is his secretary, Conrad. I can give you no idea what a low, cruel, depraved creature he is. He is not human at all and he detests me. I hate him too. I know now what it is really

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to hate, for the first time. This evening when I was serving at dinner Conrad forced Meyer to lower himself even to the depth of his showing me in front of a guest that I was their servant. Meyer said "What a good meal Till has made for us this evening", and then he said to the guest "I do not know how we could manage in Barcelona without a *cook* like Till", and then they both smiled. It was terrible, Pearl, terrible. That is the lowest point I have ever reached. And all the time I was in agony about the fire.'

'But, my dear Till, you have *us*, and we understand you.'

'Yes, yes, but if you knew how I hate being their servant. I left Berlin in order that I might escape from that, and now, here, it is far worse. It is degrading to be a servant, and if one is one, one becomes degraded. You alone understand me, so I tell you something which I would tell to no one else in the whole world. I am really degraded. Something is broken in me. It's as though all those crowds of people in the square here, and in Berlin, and in the hotels where I have waited had slimed across me leaving their tracks like snails. Don't contradict me, I can't bear you to comfort me. I'll tell you a story which will make you see how really true what I say is:

'When I was in the hotel in Berlin there was a very nice young waiter who served the tables next to mine and who was very fond of me. When I was new he used to help me and he saved me from getting my hands very badly burnt by touching the dishes which had just left the ovens and which were

left on a special table. Usually they used to let the new waiters get quite seriously burnt, as a joke. Well, on Saturday evenings I used to go sometimes to a dance *lokal* to meet social friends of mine who knew me not as a waiter but as a young man interested in art and who used to read Rilke. You wouldn't meet a waiter reading Rilke, would you? One evening I was at a table talking to my literary friends when this waiter came up to me and shook my hand. Before I realized what I was doing I had stared at him and said, "Who are you?" He laughed, thinking I was joking. Then I said very loud, "I don't know you. You are only a waiter." I tell you when I had said this I realized that I must be corrupt. I'm half educated, that's another thing. I haven't got the energy to educate myself into the intelligentsia, and I'm too well-educated just to be a servant, or a waiter.'

Pearl was silent.

'If ever anything happens to me, Pearl, if I die suddenly, if I kill myself, or do something violent to someone, you will understand why I have done it. I want you to know. You see I live entirely from my feelings, and I must do what they tell me to do.'

'But think, Till, there is a lot of good in your life. You work, and in addition to that you support your mother and your sister-in-law.'

'It's no use, Pearl, it's no use. I tell you, I only support them because in that way I can make myself the very centre of their lives, so that they revolve round me. They depend com-

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pletely on me, and so they *are* me, and on that condition I support them. My work is my one virtue, the virtue of my bourgeois upbringing. But what's the use of that work? Where does it lead? All my life I must remain their servant or the servant of people like them. Would you want even to exist, if you were in my position?"

Pearl did not answer. She smoothed his hair with her hand and kissed his lips. He suffered her to kiss him silently, and when she took her mouth away he did not even move. His face wore a hard disdainful expression.

"I thought you would understand that what I was saying just now had nothing to do with my erotic life. I don't seem to have conveyed it to you that I was serious."

Pearl laughed:

"What a funny, silly, child you are, Till, in spite of all your experience. How can I show my wish to help you, better than by showing that I love you?"

"Thank you! Thank you!" he exclaimed, with passionate vehemence. "I have been loved by people ever since I was fifteen. By better people than you, Pearl, too." He jumped up and stood by the window. "And what good has it done me?"

He did not listen for any answer she might have made, but leaned out of the window. His sense seemed to travel across roofs of houses up the sparsely lit mountain side to where the unsmouldering cactus field lay with white reflecting broken leaves and stalks under the brilliant late summer sky. He stood back

into the room and, still looking out of the window, he said quietly:

"In any case I have nearly lost the charm which made so many people love me. You can't deceive me about that, however hard you try."

Just then Roger came back into the room with the tea.

"What a long time you have been, my dear Roger," said Till, a little impatiently, but in English.

"Well, I've had to spread paste on all these sandwiches. If you weren't such a darned slacker you'd have helped me, Till."

He looked at them, holding the tray in his hands. "Why, what's the matter, Pearl?" he continued, "You look quite white and upset?"

"No, no," said Pearl, touching her head with her hand, "I have a headache, that is all. Till has been telling me about that beast Meyer."

"Is she really all right, Till?"

"Yes, she is quite all right. She suffers a little from this terrible heat. That is all there is wrong with you, I think, Pearl?"

Pearl agreed, nodding her head.

That evening when Till was gone, Roger said:

"Look here, Pearl, we can't invite Till out again. I am exceedingly sorry for him, but don't you see that he upsets both our lives? And it doesn't do any good either, because we don't succeed in helping him. He gives me such a sense of chaos, of aimlessness, of hysteria in everything."

"At all events," she answered, "there is one thing in him which we can keep

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hold of. That is his terrible physical pain which is too great for us to understand '

'I know, I know, and I am terribly sorry for him. But we can't let this disorganize our lives as well as his own '

'It's something that's been going on ever since the beginning of the war. You're quite right The causes lie too deep for us or for anyone else to help him now. We shall have to stop seeing him. I am very sorry. Kiss me, Roger.'

IV

His shirts and silk artistic ties, his seven suits, his thick jersey of pure wool to take care of him when he was cold, his electric flannel heater to lay on his stomach, his powder, his lipstick, his gold chain, his scents, his hair oil, his hand looking glass and magnifying looking glass; his letters from Pierre saying that he would shoot himself, from Hans saying that he only lived for his dog, from Erich saying 'dear Till, come at once to Basel', 'dear Till, whatever else happens remember we always have what we said on the pier at Sellin, there is always the steamer going down the Rhine from Bingen to Boppard'; letters from his mother enclosing fragments from the story of her life, 'forgive me for marrying him, I was happy between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three', letters from his sister-in-law, 'darling Tillyho, you have done everything for us, we have broken the china vase in the studio'; twenty letters from Till to Hans, from Till to Erich, from Till to the Finnish consul in Bremen, from Till to Christopher,

from Till to Pierre, explaining everything so clearly that finally he kept them; he did not post them; he wanted to read them himself.

On the table by his bed, his clock and the photograph of his mother.

Behind this was pasted one of his father, a Prussian officer with severe frowning lean assertive snub face, and wearing uniform and iron cross and a sword. There was no traceable resemblance to Till in this photograph.

To delete every vestige of one parent from one's face is, in its way, as remarkable a feat of the human will as the building of the Panama Canal.

He rested. He was not unhappy. On the contrary he rested with the satisfaction of a great performer resting after a sublime performance. He lay staring up at the ceiling. The light hit his face which was lined but expressionless as a sheet of paper with only lines drawn on it. He rose, lit a cigarette. He lay down again with the cigarette in his hand and his eyes wandering.

My dressing-gown, my looking glass, my body seen from my bed, my gramophone.

He got up and put a record on the gramophone. He lit another cigarette, angry with it. The record finished. The needle ticked against the end,

I, I, I, I, I.

He stopped the gramophone. He lay on his bed. The tune went on playing in his head:

I live in the centre of wonder like a planet
I have sex appeal to which you all must yield
My body burns soft like candle light
The surface attracts like a magnetic field.

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He lit a cigarette. He lit another cigarette (angrily). He put another record on. It ticked at the end,

I, I, I, I, I.

He stopped the gramophone. He lay on his bed. The tune went on playing:

When I am alone a certain rhythm fails
Which dragged me on wheels through traffic and down lanes
Or made me dance with a dance tune's emotion

I am like a patient wanting medicine
The outside movements were my nurse
that brings

A glass, a light plays on her face
Her newspaper my thoughts, her lullabies
My peace, but when she goes
The impulse stops the music is so still
The wall so motionless, it is a kind of
movement

That drags me back and back against my
I watch a flower that mocks and visibly
grows

My mind is empty like a mirror
Which rays explore with endless searching
terror

I am aware of error.

His eyes range the room resting on nothing. His lips are dry. It is unbearable to be alone.

Suddenly, with the malicious avarice of an animal his eyes stare and then focus on his writing desk . . . He noticed that one drawer was not properly shut. He jumped from his bed and pulled it right open. Then he saw that the papers had been disturbed and were not in their right order . . . He hurriedly threw them all out on the

floor and examined them . . . He found that a corner where the address had been written on one letter was torn away. It was the address of an elderly female relative who lived in Berlin and of whom he had spoken with Conrad in the days when they were on good terms . . . Conrad and Mayer had not yet returned from their party, so Till quickly opened the door and ran along the passage past the lobby to Conrad's room. In the drawer of the table by Conrad's bed he found the piece of the letter which Conrad had torn away. Till had not the least doubt that Conrad intended to write to his relative in order in some way to blackmail her, or at least to make mischief between her and himself . . . She was his only relative with money. He returned to his room, and quickly undressed and flung himself into bed . . . He read through his relative's letter and it seemed pathetic that the old lady should become estranged from him . . . He wept. His eyes shone with anger mingled with a strange triumph. . . .

Then, at the very crisis of his emotion he suddenly felt the old, defeatist, unrelenting pain form like a phenomenon of the weather, around his stomach and his heart. He turned over and drew up his knees to his chest. As he did so he saw the cactus field blaze before his eyes. He groaned, and with closed hands he pressed the letter against his mouth as though to feed the tireless flames that consumed and that shall consume him endlessly.

The Land Without Heroes

A Story by G. F. Green

A GANG of boys stood at the corner of a desolate field, one of many. Behind them the gate slung half open. Its stray look alone on the raised level of grass interrupted by hedges, showed where a living item had altered the monotony of mud-logged earth. The slung gate, the dirty, ragged group was the sole poor standard of life raised on this forgotten ground. Around the edge of the plateau, the fog huddled away everything but the cupolas, the shed-roofs, the few chimney-stacks of Calverley Works, all but an occasional high, protracted whistle or sudden barking and squeal of dogs quarrelling, far above and below where you could see. These things were never buried. From the gate, the lane – a gutter of black, seared mud – led back to an area of grey damp streets and houses – back home. For them, there was nothing abnormally drab about this scene. The sogged fields, the half blotted-out works, the distant whines and yellings, would have meant more perhaps to a southerner or a poet. But to these gutter snipes it was all familiar, where they lived, where their parents found work. Fog and grime, it was the nature of the only place they knew – their home, as the discarded clothes were

absorbed and forgotten by their own nature

This afternoon, they observed no particular change. Merely they talked among themselves more uneasily, were less forward in running out onto the field. The boy who had charge of the football seemed not to care whether he held it or another; when the other had got it, he didn't bother to keep it in motion; it lay at their feet. They seemed in fact tired of play; if they had passed beyond it, they could but wait patient under the fog and drizzle. Habit for a long time had made them forget themselves playing here, but now a breach of habit had stirred their memory. They knew they played here day after day; aware of those long days behind them, the many in front, they were tired of playing here, they felt out of humour. The breach was in their being together here, on this particular afternoon. The day before Christmas meant activities which took them miles away from the Field. They forgot the Field on Christmas Eve; they were separated into new and smaller gangs, each with business of its own, a job to get done, a matter of travel and adventure. Christmas Eve brought them to life; they became interested,

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they planned, went forth, attempted, had good or bad success. Every part of the district these gangs invaded, from morning on into the dark. The mummers were out first. They went further afield, were more dependent on the daylight. In the unaltering streets an odd gang of four, one in a sack which he never took off all day, one in butcher's apron, a steely knife in his belt, all with charcoaled faces, the shy-proud look of actors met behind the scenes, went out to enact the Derby Ram on pre-arranged doorsteps. The carollers were smaller fry; desultory in twos or threes they wandered along any gravelled drives, up any front steps that might offer; servants to their journeying, they were thought-free in brown fog-bound streets, as minstrels in the green sunlit plains of the Loire.

In bed that night they lay quiet each with so many pennies to tell of a day's wandering which seemed strangely long, far different from other days. A mummer perhaps might smile at the edge of sleep, lauded by a refrain sung at each point of the day – 'Failey, failey, failey-nanny-go-lay' – until his night and day were lost to him. For a day, he had sloughed off all he knew; he slept, endowed with an alien care-free pride, his birthright through six centuries. It was a day outside the rest, its trophies – pennies and an unconscious gap. For a whole day the Field was deserted.

This afternoon they were here together. There had been a law which prevented any under the age of 16 from singing carols for money. No one

had read the law but all had heard of it. Some said it was a Law of the Land, others that it was a Bye-Law imposed by the Town Council. It didn't matter, it was sufficient. Immense fines were the rumoured penalty; that meant two or three months of course; for the parent they said. Opinions differed a little; some said it seemed rather a pity, others that it was not before time, they were only a nuisance. But no one quite knew what to say or think, either in the residential district beyond Marlborough Road, or in the congested area round Calverley Works. So discussion was vague and rather irritable. Mothers in the big shrub-and-tree concealed houses spoke with a half-smile about its only encouraging mercenary ways, whilst mothers, scrubbing and scouring in the back yards of Nelson Street, put a stop to the squabbling by a clout over the ears. No one knew much about it or seemed to care very much, until the children themselves learned that it was futile to question any more. They just accepted it like a strike or a death or birth in the family. Good luck to them was unheard of gain to be exploited at all costs, they were born to accept bad luck as the usual course.

They were here then, because this day from now on was to be like any other. There was no change, it was just another day. Yet they stood, waited almost, a forlorn unled group, where all should have been leaders. Normally they fitted raggedly into the battered landscape, shouting out across the Field, making for a goal of two brown

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thread-bare jackets; but to-day they seemed wrong, uncared-for in their filthy, misshapen rags, forsaken by that area of streets, houses, works, hidden below by the fog. They waited, out of time and place, as sheep, wearied by mist, will huddle under a wall, passed quickly in a car, without pity. They seemed no longer children, but ageless beings who had succumbed to the endless work, the no relief of that pitiless grey land.

When he sensed a movement, like an intake of breath, a strengthening of shoulders, no more than a shift of attitude from themselves to the Field, Bob Dawes stopped them by saying:

‘They should never a dun it.’

Bob Dawes was short and dark. He was podgy too, and would have been called Podgy but for his look and the way he stood. But his round chubby face was grave; its swarthinness had changed the comic red of his cheeks to russet and his eyes were a still round black. He seldom opened his mouth, moved only to pass or shoot, or keep goal averagely. Bob Dawes just stood and was always with them. Nobody minded him.

But now they turned and eyed him carefully. Their hard anger, cold and ready, had been touched as a defensive hand brushes to grasp the feathered tails of arrows in the quiver.

‘Dun wot?’

They were looking at him. No one touched the ball.

‘That there lor. They should never a dun it.’

They weren’t sure of him. Was he defiant?

‘Well an wot abaht it? Oo sez they should av?’

‘Ah’m sayin they shouldna’

‘Well an ah sez wot abaht it? Tha keeps sayin summat’s wrong – well we’re waitin . . . wot’s up wi thi?’

‘Aw cum on, let’s get on t’ field.’

‘Oo’s askin’ thee t’interfere? Tha can –’

‘– Aw shurru! Tha’s allus got summat ter –’

‘Well thee keep thi mug shut. Ah’m not askin thee. All I sez is, if Bob Dawes –’

‘Aw let lad be . . . wot’s it matter. . . .’

‘Aye cum on, let’s get on wi t’game. Let owd Bob go an sing t’carols issen if e’s that gone on it.’

He laughed, swung back his foot, ran out after the ball.

‘E dursn’t!’

Another followed on to the Field.

‘Corse e dursn’t, e’s fair scared o’ bein in t’goal, e’d faint if e sor a Bobby. . . .’

and from out on the field ‘. . . cum on, man, pass!’

‘– aw look where yer goin! – ah’m not in Dunstone!’

‘– Cum on, Fred lad! –’

‘Watch me blob-blind ’im – mind out, Bert!’

‘Bang it!’

‘Good save!’

‘Cum on Knobby!’

A few of them swung and eddied

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round the goal. They retreated, collected the ball, advanced, passing it and repassing it across the uneven line; then one would shoot to a pause, rapidly closed over as they retreated back to the ball. And at each retreat, one or two from the crowd round Bob Dawes had joined in to increase the advance. Gradually they were dropping off from the remnant crowd, joining the rest of the gang on the Field. Only a few remained to hear him out.

'Well, wot abaht it? Wilta go thissen or arta scared on it?'

'Ah'm tellin thee—e dursn't. E'll talk fine enough—'

'—garn! tha's frightened!'

'Tha dursn't open thi mouth and tha maun do that afore thi can sing!'

'E'll not go.'

'Not e'.

'Not e . . . it wor all talk.'

'Well wot abaht it?'

Bob Dawes' chubby russet face had not altered. He spoke as quietly as he stood.

'Ah've telled thee. Ah'll go if t'rest on thee'll go.'

The two that were left gathered force to drive him back, make their escape.

'Oh aye! get all on us pinched t' save thissen!—there's a deal o' talk wi' thi but—'

'Nay, it wor your idea. Wot thi want t'jabber fer if thi dursn't do it thissen?'

'Aye, thee suggested it an thee maun do it.'

'Fact is — *tha's frightened.*'

Bob Dawes looked at them in front of the crowded field, and said,

'All reight then, ah'll go wi' myssen.'

But he said this to their backs. About to join in the game, the last one turned,

'Tha maun show us thi muneey fest,' he shouted, 'then p'raps we'll believe thi'.

They were all running up the field alongside Fred. He watched them and heard as they reached the goal,

'Bang it, Fred!'

'Good save!'

Then the excited, mobile, pause.

Bob Dawes turned his back on the Field. He went through the open gate, shutting it behind him. The fog had come up; it chilled his collarbones under his thin jersey, and his wrists at the threadbare seams of his pockets where his hands were clenched. At each step, his boots sank into the welter of black mud. His feet grew cold as the watery mud saturated the leather, seeped in through the lace holes. For some time while he was going down the lane, he could hear the liberated shouts of the gang up on the Field. The shame of the outcast slowly whelmed him to whom they refused the pride of this first heroism. Later, the shouts could no longer be heard. And then there was only his boots squelching through the mud, and the shifting fog when he coughed towards the hedgerow.

When it came dark, a thin rain set in, taking place of the fog. Bob Dawes

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saw its even strands, like grey cotton ceaselessly unwound, as he passed a street lamp at the end of their road. He came into Nelson Street. A ditch went alongside the street, between an asphalt pavement and a continuous wall of advertisement hoardings. It had been dug liberally enough for a few thorn shrubs to get a hold between the thrusting supports, and for a strip of mud path to wend over gravel heaps and runnels cut from the gutter, on the street side bank. Bob Dawes turned right. He walked on the pavement, dark grey beside the gleam of wet, macadamized road. He reached Marlborough Road. Here he turned left in the direction of the 'residential district', the roads which held comfortably three or four big houses in their own gardens, with fields and woods at the back.

It was a long walk at night, alone. And Bob Dawes was never more alone. At home, during his father's tirades, he would stand near his brother, until they could get out into the yard, climb the wall, get away to be with the gang. Outside, there had always been the gang. But now no one at home, nor the gang even, knew where he was. He was quite alone, silent to the whole world, just himself. Alone, he became aware of his clothes, his body in his clothes. Tearing about the streets, getting his meals at home, sitting along with the others at his desk, he had never been aware in this way. But now, he saw the holes in his jersey where the singlet showed, the dirt unbroken from jersey to shorts, covering stockings and

boots. He felt the utter grime of his face, the sloven weariness of his feet. For the first time in his life he felt a longing for those sheets, smooth pillows, huge warm beds that he had watched with the gang many a Saturday afternoon at the Lyceum. Then they had watched them with callous gaiety, but now his soul ached simply for one night in them, one night in that other world which he saw now was true, one – oh call it magical Christmas Eve!

A street lamp showed an edge of streaky pavement and road, part of a laurel hedge and upwards to a few stark trees which held among them a couple of evergreen firs. Through the branches, beyond the dark gulf of garden, he saw the amber light of an upstairs window, a section of wet roof. He followed the laurel hedge until it curved in to make a bay for the big white gate. There he turned in, feeling already the gravel of the drive under his boots. The rain dribbled along the rungs of the gate to fall softly into the gravel. He stretched up his arms to pull back the long iron catch; it was ice cold, resistant to his guilty tugs. The rain streamed down his hands into the loose sleeves of his jersey. Then he managed to wrench back the catch and the gate snapped to behind him.

He was no more aware of his clothes. There hadn't been a man watching him tug at the gate. He walked resolutely up the gravel drive. Warmer now, a thin jet of courage quickened and flickered in him, arrogant of the soft pad of his boots, sodden on the sodden sandstone steps. He stood

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in the big stone veranda, his eyes set on a tangle of convolvulus black like a huge nest, where a column held up the roof. Then, loud and unafraid, in true defiance, he sang at the big house, the wide garden, the policemen ranging the distances.

‘Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about
Deep and crisp and even.’

At ‘If thou knowest –’ the door opened and he stopped. He saw the lady’s heavy face of inquiry peer down on him, from a hall green with holly glittering with decked out Christmas tree.

‘Who are you?’

Her voice was provoked, disagreeable.

‘Bob Dawes.’

‘Well don’t you know there’s a law forbidding you all from coming round here carol singing?’

‘They should never a dun it.’

‘I can’t help that. The Law’s the Law. You know perfectly well you’ve no business to be doing this. Where do you come from?’

‘Top end o’ Nelson Street.’

‘Nelson Street. Well do you know you can be very heavily fined for doing this? Is your father working?’

‘No. E’s on t’dole.’

‘I see. Suppose I reported you then. What would happen if he found he had a heavy fine to pay on your account? He wouldn’t be able to would he? . . . Would he now?’

‘. . . no.’

‘No, and then do you know what they’d do to him? They’d put him in prison. Your father would have to go to prison because you’ve been going round begging. Now that wouldn’t be very nice, would it? . . . would it?’

‘. . . no.’

‘No exactly. Now you knew very well you were breaking the law. You know you were doing wrong, don’t you? . . . Answer me, you know you’re doing wrong, don’t you?’

‘. . . yus.’

‘Very well then. You go straight back home. Get along off home before the policeman finds you. . . ’

Bob Dawes went two steps down from the veranda.

‘Wait a minute . . . ’

He stopped and waited.

‘Here’s a penny for you, as it’s Christmas Eve . . . all right . . . now you get off home.’

The door shut. Lady and richly decked hall were gone. Bob Dawes felt the chill from his sogged boots creep under his wretched clothes, damp out the small flicker of pride and courage.

He tugged back the stiff iron catch of the gate, and unable to turn back, went on up the road, following still the laurel hedge. His left hand clenched the one hard coin. The laurel hedge stopped. A wooden fence began, barring a plantation with fields through it, until it became choked with neater privet where the garden of Morton Lodge began. Bob Dawes went on beside the privet and fence, and turned

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in where they curved to form a bay for the gate. He felt the gravel under his boots. His hands reached up to the rough five-barred gate, felt at its lichened bars for the latch, pressed down easily the loose wooden lever, and the gate swung closed behind him. He went up the drive towards the lighted stained-glass panes of the front door. He stood there and began to sing at the dark mass of stone in front of him.

'Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about
Deep and crisp and even.'

He had hardly begun when the door flung open, to show him a man, fine in black suit with stiff white shirt, a napkin held up to his red, angry face; behind him the gloom of the hall was warmed where a rosy, gilded lantern stood on a great chest.

'Clear off!' the man shouted, 'D'you know yer trespassing on my grounds? Get out—*get out*. D'yer hear?'

Bob Dawes moved back.

'... damned impertinence. ...'

The door slammed. The door was a dark shade round the lighted stained-glass panes in front of him. He went back down the drive, through the easily opened gate

He turned left again where the privet and fence curved immediately to form the bay for the gate into the next garden. The latch clicked behind him as he went forward through the lawn, wide and dark to the abating rain. The coin was hot in his left fist.

He stood short of the three front steps and began to sing at the white door. He sang faintly, as if he did not expect the sound to penetrate that white door, as if that surface thicker than anything else in the world had made his task hopeless. He went on singing until the carol was over. Then he rang the bell; his finger pressed long where it said 'Ring' in the brass disk. He heard a light being switched on, footsteps, then the door gently opening.

'I was beginning to think you were never coming' The young man was smiling 'I thought perhaps the weather had kept you all indoors. It is raining still isn't it?'

'There's been a lor, mekkin it illegal.'

'Good gracious! really? That's rather odd isn't it? . . . Whell! . . . anyway, here you are. . . '

He leaned forward. Two coppers fell chill against the hot coin in his opened fist.

'My word it's a rotten night!'

The closing door reopened a little—

'A happy Christmas, son.'

—shut.

Bob Dawes looked on up the road. It gleamed sleek under the lamps stepping out at the edge of the dark pavement. On the right the woods were black walling up against the road; on the left the fence ran on keeping back the open fields. He looked on up the road; his fist clenched the three hard coins; he was unable to go on. He turned and began to go back along the part of Marlborough Road that he had come to know.

The Land Without Heroes

The big houses were closed in their gardens. No light came from them. But street lamps showed the greased length of road between its shrubby banks, well-kept like a private drive. He saw his mud-caked boots treading on the neat surface, and trod gently, almost humbly, as if he feared to leave mud on the road. His left arm was held stiff and apart from him, as he might have carried something breakable. In his hot fist he could feel the first coin, warmer than the other two. Round his body, his clothes were cold and solid; if he probed his woollen jersey, it yielded like damp cardboard, his finger pressed the bared singlet. An ache of damp and cold bound his feet, his knees, his ribs, tight and tighter, till a shudder wrenched him free, for the cold ache to start again. The rain had stopped. Overhead, smoke – huge clouds massed and remassed, a black turmoil, rolled up to the pale stark gaps. Unprotected, he pressed his right arm across him, his fist gripping his armpit. He wanted to huddle under his free arms, wholly, without need of coins to keep apart his hands. He longed to run, not wildly to the smooth-warm beds of picture heroines, but truly to the worn iron bedstead, the blankets which he shared with his brother.

At the end of Marlborough Road, his body was weak to his shuddering, his eyes closed. He was lost in the mere travail of his body, the pain which had ceased to be pain. He was numb to any misery he might have felt.

Suddenly a thin clatter fell behind him in the deserted road. He jolted against the wall. The first warm coin was absent from his loosened fist. The clatter seemed to sing in his body, frightened him, as if it had given him away. He began to run from it, ran on down Nelson Street, ran until his boots were hidden on the mud path, no longer heard. He stumbled over a runnel; before thought, he had let slip another coin, unseen into the grassy ditch; it had fallen without any sound. He hurried forward, stooping, breathless came to the next runnel. He feigned a stumble, unclosed his hand, the last coin fell darkly into the black mud.

Across the runnel he gathered himself up. His freed arms wrapped him closely and he ran first on the strip of path, then on the pavement, then on the road. At last it was the door marked No. 17 that was in front of him, the door of his home. He opened it and went in.

Two days after Christmas, Bob Dawes turned up as usual at the Field. It was morning so the fog which shrouded the cupolas of Calverley Works was lighter. The gang of boys were talking together near the open gate, their voices loud, filling the neighbour fields. They were waiting for the rest to turn up. Bob Dawes stood near the gate. The gipsy stare, the russet, chubby face were duller, bound to his loose fists empty of coppers. Further out into the Field, a group stood around Fred who held the ball, ready to drop kick it out on to the

G. F. Green

empty ground and to start. They were pressing him to do or say something, but he kept smiling and shaking his head, only half intrigued, the ball poised in his fingers. Bob Dawes watched this group. He wanted Fred's tentative hands to drop the ball; kick it far over the Field, with all following. He wanted him to start, before he gave way. He felt rooted to the earth, dependent upon this outcome. Then he heard behind him:

'Didsta go carollin' then?'

He turned. The words led them forward who were coming from the lane. Those with Fred carried on arguing and smiling.

'Aye didsta go?'

'Wheer's thi muney?'

Bob Dawes looked at them. They looked at him, stopping. They waited for him to answer.

'Ah didn't go.'

They waited, sullen. But the foremost of them put an end to the story. He spoke firmly:

'O'course tha didna go. Nowt burra feul would a gone.'

They went forward with him towards the others. From among them came stray ends of their mistrust.

' . . wot abaht it anyway? . . .'

' . . . nuthin . . .'

' . . . nuthin . . .'

They merged with the others round Fred. Fred shook his head, smiled, kicked the ball high out over the Field. They followed him out. He ran ahead of them and stood in goal.

'Cum on, pass it man!'

' . . Aw look where yer goin - ah'm not in Dunstone!'

' . . mind out, Bert!'

' . . Bang it, Bob lad!'

'Good save!'

The game swayed and surged over the Field, riddled with shouts. Round them the fog lightened. Below came the shrill screams, the iron clankings, the gun-like reports, the crescendo of noise rising towards midday in Calverley Works. Farther out, in the streets and houses, the barking dogs, trains on the line, the sound of motors, the inanimate cries of the district, echoed work being resumed after the Christmas holiday.

Cross Section

HUNGER MARCHERS

THEY are home again by now. Next year, no doubt, the demonstration will be seen once more. Last year, certainly, it was more startling to the complacent – there was at least the beginning of a riot. This year apprehension ran higher in advance. But, whether by design or by mood, the whole episode was muffled and muted. The recent reverberations from Paris found no echo: a ‘blood-red fury’ of the Thames is still, apparently, a contradiction in terms.

It was a dreary February Sunday. trees covered in bluish mist. The Hunger Marchers went up the park road, past the Dorchester Hotel and the new blocks of ‘luxury’ flats. At Marble Arch they entered the green space of the park and formed round various platforms, which were coal carts without horses. Dark crowds listened to speeches from these platforms for over two hours; and then, at the sound, of a bugle a resolution was put from each platform and passed with a little cheering. The resolution was wordy, to the effect that the new Unemployment Bill was a bad measure or in general protesting against the treatment of the workless. The detachments afterwards marched away and left the park empty, except for a litter of paper everywhere.

That was the demonstration.

The procession was decked with banners, mainly red in colour, with inscriptions: ‘Red Front . . . Unite against the Slave Bill . . . Would a maggot starve because the Apple was too big? . . .’ The marchers were small, haggard, despondent, in dirty waterproofs, or carried haversacks, relics sometimes of their marching in the war in France. Communist clubs and local unemployed paraded in sympathy, mostly very young persons with solemn faces, who shouted solemnly: ‘Who’s the Loch Ness Monster? – Ramsay.’

At Marble Arch the crowd overflowed the roadway. Mounted Police piloted passing cars through. The crowd became denser. The police removed the photographers who were standing up by the railings and then drove the crowd back with their horses. A girl with red hair was carried to a dressing station. The usual Sunday speakers at Marble Arch felt neglected. Advocates of Islam, theories of Immortality and other subjects stood on their perches, gazing in silence. An evangelist had chalked on the roadway, topically: ‘The Earthquake – Repent.’

At the platforms the speakers opened their mouths wide, urging thin strained tones into the winter afternoon. One said his wife, through under-

Cross Section

nourishment, had been taken to a mental home. One, looking at the very fine constables, said the police were paid servants of the people, and it was strange the servants should be better clothed and fed than the people. Another said that being born into a certain class was just a chance: it was only an accident that he was not the Prince of Wales. Some laughter. They strove for audibility in the expanse.

In the atmosphere was a sense of futility. The hopeless marchers seemed almost relieved when at last it was time to march away, a long human stream below the Park-side trees, tapping drums, carrying angry flags, murmuring weakly – a long stream of persons who have been omitted from the desirable side of living – probably for ever.

Many well-dressed spectators had long since departed. It was a poor spectacle from their point of view. A nice voice of a young man remarked: 'Awful lot of toughs. Not really toughs, weak-kneed rather . . . What about getting back to tea?'
G. B.

TWO PLAYS

By the time these notes appear, Mr. Sean O'Casey's play, *Within the Gates*, will have been withdrawn. But the production at the Royalty Theatre deserves to be remembered, even although it did not do the play anything like full justice. And it can, and should, still be read in book form (Macmillan: 7s. 6d.).

Some called Mr. O'Casey's play pretentious. But it is sincere, palpably. The accusation is really against the non-realistic convention in which the play is written. Opera is seldom accused of pretentiousness; but that convention was long ago accepted. Possibly the word 'pretentious' belongs here to the vocabulary of resistance, as does 'ugly' in the case of new painting. For, in truth, the play is the very contrary of pretentious: it starts at the other end of the stick. It is partly made up of doggerel and of the technique of a musical comedy. Some down-and-outs sing a song. How is that more 'pretentious' than a song by Children of the Ritz?

The commonest and most popular devices of the modern stage have been taken in hand in an attempt to convert them to the purposes of art. Would not Shakespeare, in our day, have essayed a musical comedy or a *revue*? Mr. O'Casey has not yet succeeded in his intention. But what a failure! So much better than many trite, correct, and charming successes, concerning which the critics are very kind and vie in discovering hidden merits.

Like most technical experiments, more effort went into the surface than the basis. The plot was as for a novelette, and yet almost any given five minutes of the play's duration was excitingly good. A mood, not a thought, was communicated. What mood? Reckless pity for the driftwood humanity which, on any day of the week, may be seen on the paths and

Cross Section

benches of a city park; also a sense that only those who feel necessity are alive. Incidentally, Mr. O'Casey is one of the first to dramatize the comic tragedy of park debaters, with their half-mad gropings towards an intellectual sun. In result, the play took another half-step towards that poetic theatre, which, with the recent narrowing of the gulf between colloquial and poetic language, is due very soon. That cannot be forgotten.

Another occasion has been the production of Mr. W. H. Auden's play, *The Dance of Death*, by the enterprising Group Theatre. Two Sunday evenings only, at the Westminster. But the performance leaves a vitalizing current in the dull air of the theatre.

M. Valéry wrote somewhere that, for himself, he would prefer the Intellectual Comedy to the Human Comedy or even to the Divine Comedy. Travesty the phrase, and we may speak of Mr. Auden's play as intellectual comedy. Is not this, for some reason, the kind of art most praised to-day? Look at the figures who are highly respected in contemporary literature: Mr. Yeats, Mr. Eliot, M. Valéry himself. In each of these what we watch is chiefly an intellect at play, self-delighting: and occasionally we pass remarks on their inhumanity – they have resisted and omitted so much of life. This is very different from the Human Comedy in which everything is accepted; there the artists number Cervantes, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Rembrandt, per-

haps even Beethoven. To-day the Young are influenced away from that natural middle art of those former men. Is this a true tendency of the time? Is it inevitable? Is the creative commentator, from now onward, to be our most loudly acclaimed personage?

Mr. Auden, at any rate, is in the line of comment. His little play does not refer to our emotions; but demands our amusement as concession to a political datum – namely, society, as it is, is doomed. Towards the persons on the stage, representatives of the out-moded society, our pity is not expected, rather our contempt. The tone is callous.

C It looks as though they had caught a pickpocket. Yes, ugh, don't look, they're breaking his back against the railings.

B Very regrettable.

We, the audience, laugh. That is the mood to which we are inducted.

We are shown various methods of revitalization being sought for modern society: athleticism, pre-war arrogance, fascism with jew-baiting, and the escape from machine civilization to country life. Each fails; Marx enters in triumph; and present society wails a miserable dirge for itself. Nothing is persuaded; you are supposed to be in alignment with this fashion of thinking.

The people are de-personalized, being items of a public response to various ideas; for example, a response to fascism –

Cross Section

In the good old days I was a Black and
Tan

I was always there when the tortures
began:

If you give us a whip I'll do what I can,
I'll follow thee.

The form is a *ballet* with words, both spoken and sung. Since the people are de-personalized, we move towards a purer acting, which approaches that absolute purity – of puppets. The mode is suitable for pre-conceived social comments, if fantasticated. The words should have been spoken more distinctly. But it was a memorable performance – and perhaps a portent.

G. B.

partly open to the elements. The corrugated iron roof was rusty and leaky, and the general atmosphere most deplorable. He found the young girl and her child seated by the fire-side, and was informed that her baby was born on January 20th. No one attended mother or child. The baby was dark blue in colour; its eyes were closed, and one appeared septic. Its clothing was a dirty vest and a piece of dirty rag. . . ' *West Sussex Gazette*

II

'LADY wishes advice to mitigate her too acute and prolonged distress on seeing or reading about any cruelty to animals. —Write Box M.885.'

Advt. in *The Times*

RAW MATERIAL

I

'A SHOCKING state of affairs was disclosed in the course of an application made to the Juvenile Court at Fareham, for an order to place a girl of sixteen and her baby in charge of a fit person. Inspector Lang stated that with P.C. Rowe he went to a copse at Tichfield, where he found a wooden shack 15 ft. by 15 ft. in which a man, a woman, and the girl lived. It contained a double bed, table, two chairs and a chest of drawers. On the bed was a filthy mattress, the only coverings being a piece of dirty brown blanket and some filthy old clothes. The place was in bad repair, the walls in some places being patched with cardboard and newspapers and the fireplace was

FROM A NOTEBOOK

*The human body is beautifully grotesque;
Narcissus died of laughing.*

*Words are sometimes given us to congeal
our thoughts.*

The subtlest temptations are those of Virtue.

*Upon my knees beside my bed.
I thank my God for things unsaid,
But weep until the rising sun
For thoughts unthought and deeds undone.*

*There is no chastity like the verbal liber-
tine's.*

Cross Section

*It is always possible to say something new
about love. To do something new about
it is impossible.*

*The hard-boiled egoist forgets his shell is
brittle*

*The manifestations of second childhood are
pitiable; second adolescence has not
yet been investigated.*

*A sense of one's own limitations is the
greatest of all temptations.*

*The enamel of culture wears best on a priming
of hard vulgarity.*

Surbanity is better than Metropolitish.

*My mind is not so shallow that he who puts
his foot in it will escape a wetting.*

D. G. B.

PRESS NOTE

A STUDENT of Fleet Street writes: 'Religious wars are notoriously ferocious. The strategy of the short but lively battle in the Dickens Salient was worth observing. Dickens, of course, has before now proved a valuable card to play in the non-stop tournament of the Big Circulation. So has Religion, in the vaguer senses of the word. And when it was announced a few months ago that the *Life of Our Lord* written in 1845 by Charles Dickens himself would be on the market, the combination of ideas clearly offered enormous temptations for somebody to cash in quickly.

'The Rothermere forces occupied

this unique stronghold. For the publication rights of the 15000 words they paid (it is said) a sum equivalent to about half of the total of Dickens' estate. For days the trumpets blew, at corresponding expense, on hoardings and whole-page advertisements, announcing the glad news of this revelation to the English race. They did not hesitate (how could they, at the price?) to hail it as the "literary event of the century". But the Beaverbrook army was not dismayed. No, they put up a brave fight. Within a very few days of the Rothermere onslaught they rallied, and produced a first counter-attack in the shape of a powerful article – "Why Don't You Read the World's Best-Seller?" – exhorting England to return to the study of Holy Writ, unabridged and untouched by human hand. Then, thinking hard and thinking quick, they further offered us (1) a detective story entitled *The Nine Tailors*, and (2) a "series of articles of inescapable meaning . . . a challenge to every institution and creation of man's genius – Church, State, commerce, industry, society". This seemed overwhelming, especially when one of the six chosen to tell what would happen "If Christ Came Back –" turned out to be a gentleman described as "the famous *Sunday Express* commentator, man of the world, philosopher, and believer in mankind".

'At the moment of writing the issue of the battle is undecided. At the moment of reading it will doubtless be forgotten. But the odd thing is that nothing more fantastic could be invented by "Beachcomber" himself.'

Reviews

AFTER STRANGE GODS

AFTER STRANGE GODS. By T. S. ELIOT.
Faber & Faber. 3s. 6d.

THERE is a curious note of despair in Mr. T. S. Eliot's three lectures to the University of Virginia, which he has published with the sub-title of 'A Primer of Modern Heresy'. It is as though he had become suddenly aware of isolation, of the degree of stubbornness with which his former followers were determined to prefer the chance manna of the waste land to any grape harvests from Canaan – 'in our time, controversy seems to me, on really fundamental matters, to be futile'.

A curious note, because the overwhelming importance of Mr. Eliot as a moralist arises from the fact that he does not stand alone, that he has a Church behind him. Compared with that authority his kinship with his great American predecessors, Henry Adams and Henry James, is a small thing, though it may appeal to those who are readier to accept the dogmas of a critic than of a Church. These three writers have examined the decay of the religious tradition in the modern world with an equal integrity, but Mr. Eliot has been enabled to proceed further than his predecessors by not remaining outside the Church.

Henry Adams saw clearly enough. 'Of all the conditions of his youth which afterwards puzzled the grown-up man, this disappearance of religion puzzled him most', but the sight helped him to nothing better than a peculiarly hopeless historical theory. Henry James reacted in the same direction as Mr. Eliot: 'We had all the fun of licence, while the truth seemed really to be that fun in the religious connection closely depended on bondage'; but he stopped short where Rowland Mallet in *Roderick Hudson* stopped short, with the wonder 'whether it be that one tacitly concedes to the Roman Church the monopoly of a guarantee of immortality, so that if one is indisposed to bargain with her for the precious gift one must do without it altogether'. It remained for Mr. Eliot to be explicit over the remedy: 'The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide' (*Thoughts After Lambeth*).

The three lectures in *After Strange Gods* are very short; indeed they are too short for Mr. Eliot to approach his subject, the effect on literature of this

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decay of religious tradition, with due caution. The very perfection of his critical prose (and we must go back to Dryden to find a style so exactly ordered and free from extraneous ornament) throws into relief the startling orthodoxy of his criticism: his discussion of heresy and diabolical influence in contemporary literature. 'I am afraid that even if you can entertain the notion of a positive power for evil working through human agency, you may still have a very inaccurate notion of what Evil is, and will find it difficult to believe that it may operate through men of genius of the most excellent character. I doubt whether what I am saying can convey very much to anyone for whom the doctrine of Original Sin is not a very real and tremendous thing.'

His first two lectures are little more than introductions to this theme. In his first he defines his use of the term tradition: 'all those habitual actions, habits and customs, from the most significant religious rite to our conventional way of greeting a stranger, which represents the blood kinship of "the same people living in the same place".' Unity of religious background is needed for the proper development of a tradition, and to preserve what is valuable in tradition, to make it a dynamic and not a static way of life, he postulates continuous criticism under the supervision of orthodoxy, orthodoxy being a matter of the conscious intelligence, while tradition is a way of 'feeling and acting'. In his second lecture he deals with the

crippling effect upon men of letters of not having been brought up in the environment of a living and central tradition, examining for this purpose the poetry of Mr. Yeats and Mr. Pound, and short stories by D. H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield. But it is when Mr. Eliot reaches in his last lecture the subject of diabolical influence, of the operations of the Evil Spirit, that one is aware among his audience of a shocked agnosticism. Mr. Eliot has never made any secret of his Faith. To be a Catholic (in Mr. Eliot's case an Anglo-Catholic) is to believe in the Devil, and why, if the Devil exists, he should not work through contemporary literature, it is hard to understand. It may be objected (with doubtful truth) that this is not aesthetic criticism, but Mr. Eliot writes, 'I am uncertain of my ability to criticize my contemporaries as artists; I ascended the platform of these lectures only in the role of moralist'. Moral criticism indeed, if one accepts the truth of Christianity at all, is of far greater importance than literary criticism, which is concerned only with refining the intellectual pleasures, while moral criticism is concerned with the saving of souls.

That statement is not likely to appeal to a large proportion of those concerned with literature; an appeal to humanitarianism, to the salvation of the body, will win more support. And that appeal is implicit too in Mr. Eliot's criticism of such writers as Lawrence who claim an Inner Light, who waken men to spiritual experience and then

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cram them with some religious concoction of their own making. 'Most people are only a very little alive; and to awaken them to the spiritual is a very great responsibility: it is only when they are so awakened that they are capable of real Good, but that at the same time they become first capable of Evil.' It is too early to see the result of Lawrence's hysterical religious beliefs on his followers, and Mr. Eliot might have reinforced his case with the example of Laurence Oliphant, an earlier writer of talent, whose trust in the Inner Light broke up two lives and led to one suicide. Humanitarians are more nearly touched by a death than a damnation.

The elaboration of an individual morality, in place of a moral order directed and modified by a Church, the expression, in Mr. Eliot's phrase, of 'seductive personalities', cannot be excused by sensibility of style. The greater the writer the more dangerous his uncontrolled personality becomes. Mr. Eliot has here dealt with two writers only, Lawrence and Hardy. To them might be added a poet who has perhaps passed the dangerous peak of his popularity, Mr. A. E. Housman, with his Roman morality and his cult of suicide and despair. But if these are cases of diabolic influence, the curious thing is that the devil is after all not given the best tunes. It is in Hardy's rather absurd short stories, in Lawrence's tedious cult of dark gods, in Mr. Housman's crude adjurations to 'be a man stand up and end you', that we trace the

expression of the unregenerate personality. Lawrence's lovely 'Ship of Death', Hardy's 'Survivor' (to take one of a score of examples), the penultimate poem of Mr. Housman's *Last Poems* might all have been written under the supervision of the strictest orthodoxy. The unregenerate personality, 'the hot breath and the roused passion' of James's story, 'The Jolly Corner', is in James's phrase blatant, vulgar, and Mr. Eliot is not strictly orthodox when he writes in a criticism of Mr. Pound's *A Draft of XXX Cantos*: 'a Hell altogether without dignity implies a Heaven without dignity also'. The unregenerate personality, checked by no outside order and free from any but self criticism, is without dignity and works, as in Marlowe's tragedies, with squibs and firecrackers. This *Saving Grace* (that once marked Cain's brow) almost eliminates the distinction between morals and aesthetics and makes it unnecessary for Mr. Eliot to disclaim in these lectures the role of literary critic.

BUTLER AGAIN

FURTHER EXTRACTS FROM THE NOTE-BOOKS OF SAMUEL BUTLER. Chosen and edited by A. T. BARTHOLOMEW. Cape. 7s. 6d.

BUTLER has for long enough been the object of a fairly intensive cult, which, in so far as it claims for him the title of a profound or original thinker, ought to be discouraged. He was the antithesis

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of all that was bad in the Victorian age, except in one thing: he has a specific taint which is sufficient to mark him a legitimate offspring of his time – the ugly duckling no doubt, but characteristic of the family.

Dr. Johnson, whom it is often difficult not to think of in reading Butler, somewhere described genius as consisting, in effect, of a universal or discursive talent concentrated upon a single activity. Butler had the first of Johnson's requirements for genius; but his talents, numerous as they were, gave him only a variety of *interests*: he had no sympathies. His metaphysics were shallow, his biology guess-work, his painting dilettante and his music monomaniac: while his literary criticism, like all his other activities, was inspired by the single eagerness of exposing shams.

This motive was more in the nature of a hobby than a passion. His speculations, it is true, were founded on a sufficiently strong antipathy. But if we compare Butler in this respect with Swift, another whose work was founded on antipathy, we realize that the exploitation of the feeling of antipathy was not, in Butler, the unifying activity of Johnson's 'genius'. In Swift, antipathy was a passion: it represented the frustration of a passionate sympathy. Human insensibility was to Swift a personal outrage; it made him savage because he had a passionate nature. Butler was not passionate; he had no sympathy, only interest; he was an observer, not a sufferer. The hypocrisy of his contemporaries was to him not a

source of pain, or even of exasperation, but simply material for the exercise of his hobby.

His hobby was the exposure of shams, its method the application of a simple test to all contemporary phenomena, social and intellectual. If he found in any of these the features of a vested interest, he exposed it forcefully and persistently. Organized religion, puritanism, teetotalism, the family ideal, sex obscurantism, charity, women, G. F. Watts, popular aesthetics, spurious humanitarianism, pompous respectable orthodoxies of all kinds – he pushed a satirical thumb in every pie and never failed to pull out plums of ineptitude, fraud or vanity.

His note-books are the record of his ruling hobby; it is possible to read them from the first page to the last (in the present selection at any rate) without feeling for a moment that there may be monotony in a diet of plums. One may quote almost at random without transcribing very much that is not intelligent, or at least exhilarating. Of Sir John Lubbock he writes:

He is trying at this time to teach dogs to converse. If I was his dog and he taught me, the first thing that I should tell him would be that he is a damned fool.

Often he is surprising:

Christ was only crucified once for a few hours. Think of the hundreds of thousands whom Christ has been crucifying in a quiet way ever since.

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Reviews

That is excellent and sufficient.

Miss Potter who works a good deal among the poor in Seven Dials asked me at a *conversazione*, rather abruptly, if I liked poor people. I said I did not, and there the conversation ended.

That is, for Miss Potter, sufficient. This too is excellent, and true:

I see Mr. Gladstone has been lately writing to the effect that he owes no small part of his success to the study of Dante. I am of opinion that I owe no small part of whatever small success I may have obtained to the fact that I have ignored Dante.

It is in things of this kind, dealing with contemporary pomps and vanities, that Butler excels; and many of these things still need saying. (Mr. Shaw says them pretty frequently but you cannot call him out of date). It was Butler's mission to discover that one of the leading features of the English character is its pervasive hypocrisy, and that 'opinions have vested interests just as men have'.

Hypocrisy, however, is not at the root of people's beings, but on the surface mostly: it is a social motive. The deeper motives Butler was unable to discover because he had not sympathy: he lacked the capacity for passionate thought or feeling or action which unites the imaginative and transforming critic to other men, and gives him an understanding of their essential composition. Thus the total impression that Butler's note-books leave is one of a

deliberate and consistent superficiality – or, to put it more fairly, a refusal to face the responsibilities of his gifts. He said that he hoped people would believe not in him, but in the things he admired, he ought to have wanted people to believe in him; he ought to have taken the risk of creating a vested interest in himself. As it was, he remained content to pull out plums from the social pie, hardly forbearing to add Jack Horner's legendary piece of self-congratulation. There is, indeed, a vein of complacency which runs through his writings: it is this which Butler had in common with most of his contemporaries.

GOOD QUEEN BESS

QUEEN ELIZABETH. By J. E. NEALE.
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By all, or most, of the rules this should be a bad book. Professors fortified and dignified by decades of research ought not to throw footnotes to the winds and go a-wooing after the general reader. Writers of short books on great subjects ought to be writers first and scholars second, amateurs in the true, not experts in the strict, sense. To set Elizabeth against her background ought to be a test of insight and imagination; there should be no alternative between complete success and pathetic failure.

But Professor Neale has not failed. Not having tried to write a great book

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Reviews

he has written an honest and sensible one. After years of faithful, patient, concentrated work (so concentrated that even the real Mary Queen of Scots has escaped his microscope) he has got to know Elizabeth well enough to realize the one thing about her which alone explains her – that she was a human being. To him she has become what the great lady is to the family doctor from the village at her park gates. he knows too much about her to be scared or dazzled any more; he can make short work of scandal or gossip, legend or innuendo, for he has the facts. You do not want too much imagination, too keen an eye for the picturesque, too big a range of curiosity or sympathy in the family doctor; with all these qualities he would not be right as often as he is.

If Professor Neale is right, then, Elizabeth was neither vicious nor scatter-brained. On the contrary she was a sensible and able woman who made a good Queen. She earned her success by her own common sense, energy and insight. Why not? She is a better subject for a 'popular' book if she was sexually abnormal or psychologically morbid, and anyone who opens Professor Neale's book in the hope of tit-bits about 'love' will have a grievance. It makes a neat paradox to show that all the credit for what she did belongs to someone else and that the ship was really steered by one or other of the mates while the captain was hysterically gesticulating on the bridge or sulking in bewilderment below decks. But is it not more likely

that the Queen remained unmarried because she decided that marriage would 'cramp her style' and depreciate her assets: that she managed her Council by refusing to argue with them and preserved her freedom of action behind a mask of indecision? She was popular because she took the trouble to please people and had the knack of gracious condescension: she was respected because she stood no nonsense and could be royally angry: she encouraged flattery because she enjoyed it and knew that women who show they know it for men's sop to their own vanity will never manage the vain sex. There have been women rulers since history began and the only good ones have been those who used their womanhood to help and not to hamper their rule. Monarchy, the form of government which has the longest record of success, implies the use of the sovereign's private life as the trump card in diplomacy, and Elizabeth was her own foreign secretary for nearly half a century. Judged by results she was equal to her position: the onus of proof would seem to be with those who say, as some will say of anyone who has made a name, that she was not.

Perhaps, though, Professor Neale's Elizabeth is just a shade too normal. Perhaps like Burleigh or Leicester, he has not been able to get a look at quite every card in her hand: after all, her technique was to keep men guessing, and despite all the apparatus of modern scientific research, she can do it yet. For him, it appears, she is a woman whose womanliness is in continual

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HARRAP

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Reviews

conflict with the demands of her policy. It goes to her heart to refuse Leicester's suit, to give up trying to reform Essex and behead him instead, to sign the death warrant of Mary of Scotland. But duty calls and she reluctantly responds. She is for ever fighting rear-guard actions in defence of her principles: hence some at least of her reputation for indecision, her desperate graspings at straws, her bewildering changes of mood. Was she quite as womanly as all that? There have been a few women as well as a few men who have thought a great game worth playing for its own sake – the one thing worth living for; who played every move, not reluctantly because they ought, but with zest because they must. Was not Elizabeth born to rule Englishmen, as many as possible, and did she not know it? Once the game was in her hand, what else mattered? Why did she keep Mary in England for eighteen years, and make such a to-do about executing her at last? Was it really because she could think of nothing else neither too unkind nor too imprudent? Or was it that she saw, as Disraeli perhaps saw about Gladstone (but certainly not Gladstone about Disraeli), that a sinister and dangerous opponent is the one thing that makes a leader indispensable? Mary dead, Burleigh and Walsingham would breathe more freely. True enough. But why should Elizabeth, who found them obstinate enough already, go out of her way to console them with the sure and certain hope, in the event of her death, of a Protestant succession? It may be too

much to expect a woman to see, as Aristotle saw, the advantage of 'bringing distant dangers near', consciously to grasp that the Spanish and Marian bogeys were part of the system of stresses and strains which alone made a ramshackle constitution function reasonably well: kept the Puritan loyal and the Catholics quiet. But was it a complete surprise to the Queen, when, after Mary's death and the Armada's defeat, her friends became more critical and her enemies more dangerous? If it was not, then her unwillingness to send Mary to her death was not just shuffling or conscience-stricken weakness, but genuine annoyance at the well meaning dullards who had called her bluff.

The trouble is that the English must always have their heroes good as well as heroic. Elizabeth must be good Queen Bess; must live up to the public school code. It must give her pain to condemn to death a rival who might have been a school-mate, to have to pretend she is going to marry someone eighteen years younger than herself and ugly as well, not to take the blame for her own and other people's mistakes as often as possible. Historians cannot but be a little shocked if she is rude to Parliament men defending their sacred privileges. Enlightened Churchgoers would like her to have taken her responsibilities as supreme governor more seriously and also to have shown more appreciation of the zeal of other persuasions. Something a bit more tangible to show that she was really 'in advance of her time' would be such a comfort to her well-wishers.

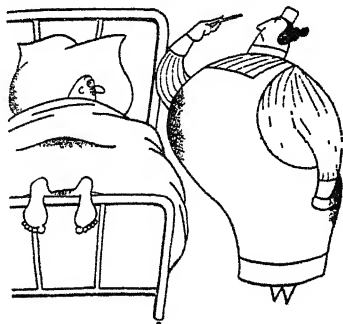
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Reviews

Fortunately for England in her time, however, Elizabeth belonged to it. She learnt her subtlety, her ruthlessness, her tenacity in an age when sentimentalism, folly and blundering were more drastically punished than they need be when there are more policemen about. Her creed was a crude and worldly one, the religion of patriotism, but as its prophet she made fewer mistakes and kept her wits closer about her than most prophets. She demands judgment by her peers.

THE QUEST FOR CORVO

THE QUEST FOR CORVO. By A. J. A. SYMONS. Cassell, 12s. 6d.

THIS ingenious book has been widely, and deservedly, reviewed; and past readers of *Life and Letters* will scarcely need reminding that Mr. Symons has twice contributed studies on his curious subject to its pages. But the whole is better than the parts, and *The Quest for Corvo* surpasses expectation. Round a curiosity of Edwardian literature Mr. Symons has built a curiosity of biography, and from seven or eight years of disconnected but continuous research has contrived to bring to life a character who seemed irrevocably lost in a mist of prejudice and ill-fame and that kind of wilful oblivion which surrounds men with a genius for making enemies.

A 'character' is said advisedly.

Rolfe was a literary eccentric, and very little more. Mr. Symons, with the fervour of a born collector, exaggerates the literary importance of Rolfe, the self-styled Baron Corvo. Certainly, if you fix your standards by the spectrum of the *Yellow Book*, his *Stories Toto Told Me* glow with a tinge of fine gold; and if you are seeking the projection of an author's fantastic day-dreaming, the Brocken spectre of a man unhappy, ill-starred, and humiliated, *Hadrian the Seventh* is a rare treasure. But essentially these books – the best of Rolfe, so far as published work goes – are curiosities, and little more. The spiritual structure of Rolfe was a brittle, lopsided thing; his erudition was makeshift; his verbal ingenuity, although it sometimes showed real etymological wit, is thin when compared, say, with Thomas Urquhart or, *longo intervallo*, Joyce.

But *The Quest for Corvo* is nevertheless a book to be read. It is a clever and very entertaining portrait gallery of the Baron's friends, foes, victims and addicts, with Rolfe of course occupying the centre of the wall. They are as fantastically contrasted in character as Rolfe could have wished: Christopher Millard, Mr. Pirie-Gordon, Robert Hugh Benson, Mr. J. Maundy Gregory . . . And the self-portrait of the biographer himself, sketched unwittingly in the margins of the book, is in itself an achievement. What a pity this Boswell never met his subject in the flesh! Or would that perhaps have destroyed the fascination of the quest?

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Reviews

A PROVINCE AND A WORLD

IN A PROVINCE. By LAURENS VAN DER POST. Hogarth Press. 7s. 6d.

MR. VAN DER POST's novel of South Africa is significant in the same way as some of the novels which have come out of Soviet Russia are significant. It is not in the least concerned with being a 'masterpiece', a 'work of genius', or even a Book of the Month: it has none of those qualities which give us *Hemmweh* for Madame Bovary, the surprisingly reproductive mother of most modern fiction. But it is a book deeply rooted in certain experiences which have obviously been lived through for long years. The social philosophy which Mr. Van der Post derives from these experiences is neither a hotch-potch of wisdom and resignation particularly designed to fit the characters of his novel, nor a claim that because he has created a work of art, he can 'see life steadily and see it whole'. It is a political attitude learnt from experience, and recommended to the reader who finds that modern life offers him a world of experience similar to Mr. Van der Post's. Thus the freshness and interest of this book lie in the author's demonstration that the psychological attitude of his characters is a political one.

The hero, Johan van Bredepoel, is a young Dutchman of extremely just character, few prejudices, and no opinions. He leaves his country home and settles in business in a boarding-

house in a small town, Port Benjamin. There he becomes friendly with a young native called Kenon, and the course of this friendship reveals to him the full meaning of racial hatred.

Partly as a result of Johan's contemplative attitude, Kenon drifts out of his life, but years later, their paths cross again, and Johan learns that Kenon has gone to the bad generally and become a drug-addict. What is so beautifully clear in this book is that Johan's relationship with Kenon is in no sense an idiosyncrasy: it is simply the expression of his sense of justice: and Kenon's tragedy is also Johan's, because it violently outrages his consciousness and the type of civilized consciousness which he represents. The kind of violence to a sensibility which is thus related, is admirably broadened at the end of the book into the picture of a riot: for the violence in which negroes, Communists, Dutch farmers, and English police take part, is general and affects our whole civilization.

It is a novel which might be called 'a book with a message'. But Mr. Van der Post has not created certain types in order to illustrate a teaching. On the contrary, he has taken some people who are convincingly real to us, and by his understanding of the qualities in them which are most living, such as the accidental interest of the young Dutchman for the black servant, he has shown how these qualities are signs of a profound revolution, and point to the deeper changes in the whole of society.

Reviews

A MODERN BATTLEFIELD

IT'S A BATTLEFIELD. By GRAHAM GREENE. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

'EACH separate gathering of English soldiery went on fighting its own little battle in happy and advantageous ignorance of the general state of the action, nay, even very often in ignorance of the fact that any great conflict was raging.' Thus Kinglake, of another battle. The conflict Mr. Greene has chosen is always raging, within each individual, young or old; always the same fighting within, of which, even at best, external life is an imperfect mirror. The individual remains separate, his conflicts wrapped away in himself. We do not know the wars of those next whom we stand in

lifts or ride in buses: scarcely even of our best friends. The fight goes on silently, within. It is only at certain moments in life that these conflicts become externalized; then, with what eagerness the outside enemy, the foreign invader whom we can see and kill, is welcomed! What joy to know that it is the Germans, or the Jews, or the Communists, who should be persecuted!

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courage, unbelievable goodness come into the open. At such moments, people appear to view, socialized and at the same time more individual.

Mr. Greene has chosen one such moment as his theme; the attempted reprieve of Jim Drover, a bus-driver, condemned to death for killing a policeman at a Communist meeting, in order to prevent his wife being struck with a truncheon. The appeal has failed, the last hope is a reprieve. The book is of the people whose lives are drawn together by this one life hanging in suspense: the Commissioner of Police; the Home Secretary's secretary; Milly Drover and her sister, Kay, who works in a match-factory; Kay's lover, Jules, cautious in life but prodigal in imagination; Conder, a journalist whose mythical wife and six children are his defence against emotional responsibility; Surrogate, a Communist intellectual, who still hates his dead wife for his little shames and lust and cowardice; Caroline Bury, who 'has faith', an ageing widow espoused to lost causes; the dead policeman's wife, a mild, suspicious woman terrified of the Press; and Conrad Drover, who has brains and curses them for all he has ever suffered, reviling them as the cause of his impotence.

All these lives are interlinked by the petition to secure a reprieve. But though linked, they are not united; each is straining as hard as he can to go his own way. When the petition is launched, the realization comes to those most deeply interested, that it is Jim's release or his death they really

want. If he is reprieved, he will be imprisoned. Conrad loves his brother's wife and doesn't want her to wait the eighteen years; nor does Jim; nor does Milly. But they are driven on to get the reprieve, and they succeed. Jim fails to commit suicide. Milly is left, a wife without a husband, a woman without the right to marry. Conrad wants Milly and he gets her. His impotence and guilt towards his brother show him he never really wanted her: he just liked taking her to Kew. He turns his self-hatred against the Commissioner and tries to kill him. But his bullet, like his life, is blank: he is knocked down by a skidding car and killed. Kay and Jules both feel they must do something for Drover. But they always do what they think they want to do; and most times they explain to themselves that it is to help Drover. Jules uses the petition to light the gas. Kay finds that though she loves Jules, he satisfies her less than men she merely lusted for. So with the others also: the occasion is provided for them to do what they always thought they wanted to do, and they find that what they wanted was not to do it, but to want to do it.

It's a Battlefield is a great advance on anything Mr. Greene has done before, more direct and definite, more certain in touch. It is moving, bitter, tragic, humorous and beautiful. It has as many facets as life. Its form and substance are equally original. The movement is quick – too quick in parts; there is a lack of relief. The reader is always conscious of the back-

Reviews

ground, the moving life of London, and sometimes too conscious: the scenery comes so close as to crowd the characters off the stage. The thoughts of the characters, especially the Commissioner, tend to predominate too much. The incidents they remember are always the same incidents – and at such times they are author-conceived rather than author-described; that is, we do not feel that the author has selected these thoughts from the chaos of consciousness, but that these reiterated memories are all the author himself knows about his characters. But when he is most successful, Mr. Greene makes us forget that he has selected his material. It appears inchoate, yet is intelligible. That is artistry.

GERMANY, PREPARE FOR WAR

GERMANY, PREPARE FOR WAR. By PROFESSOR EWALD BANSE. Translated by Alan Harris Lovat Dickson. 10s. 6d.

THIS book may strike the casual reader as ridiculous, and ridiculous things it certainly contains. Yet it is symptomatic of Europe's return to pre-war conditions of nationalism. Sixteen years have now passed since the War, and the growth of internationalism, social democracy, modern architecture, and many other good and evil adventures, seems to be submerged under an enormous backwash from 1910. Here we are, back at an improved Schlieffen plan: and if we protest that much of this book is

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Reviews

incredible, we have to remember that Germany's plans before the War were also incredible – as, for that matter, were the English and French. The atmosphere of intrigue surrounding the publication of this translation is also a relic from pre-War Germany. In a preface the publishers describe how the book was banned in Germany, the professor disgraced; how offers and threats were made to them by lawyers; and on the eve of its appearance the German Embassy issued a formal repudiation of the work as in any way representing German official opinion.

Apart from all these sensations, the book is not without interest. It is certainly not a product of Nazi thought, but it is, or might have been, a work to which the suggestible Nazi leaders would give ear. Banse's real failure is that he cannot turn his mind to the East. He is out to wreak revenge on the arch-enemy France, and to invade England, by way of Ireland and Holland. In fact the Great War so absorbs him that he seems anxious to fight it all over again, in order to show how he would win.

But the Third Reich is hardly likely to attempt another Western invasion. Not only is it temperamentally inclined to the Baltic, but an invasion of the Ukraine, if Poland were reconquered, and especially if Japan were

already fighting Russia, might be highly profitable. Here Professor Banse's tactical advice might be of use. He shows how easily Italy might be appeased, if Austrian ambitions in the Tyrol were relinquished: in that case the only powers Germany might have to fear would be France and Czechoslovakia.

Banse's military plans, if not revolutionary, are certainly intelligent. They are derived from what may be called 'geographical materialism', and he is full of schemes for the intensive exploitation of geographical features in modern warfare. The reader will be either indignant or amused at the professor's references to England. But apart from such comic passages, his style is highly respectable, and reminds one often of the recent lectures of Mr. T. S. Eliot, with its occasional references to the 'canker of Marxism', where Mr. Eliot would have written 'worm-eaten with Liberalism'. A grimmer purpose is revealed in the lines which explain how Germany lost the war: 'dreamers remained dreamers: they lacked that little touch of realism which even the most beautiful dream needs if it is to be more than mere froth'. The aim of this book is to instil that 'little touch of realism' which will fulfil 'the beautiful dream' of world conquest.

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Life and Letters

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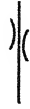
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Life and Letters

May 1934



The New Cortegiano

by G. W. Young

I

I RECENTLY picked up a tale in one of our more trivial magazines. There was nothing in the story: a benighted motorist receiving hospitality from an old gentleman in a decayed house. But my eye was caught by one sentence. The host said:

‘I wish the place was in better trim’;
and the narrator comments:

‘In better trim! Who but he could have said it?’

Well, I might have said it myself. I had never realized before what picturesque old johnnies those of us who have passed the years of discretion must seem to those who have not yet reached them, or how much innocent pleasure we can give by saying our pieces right.

While I was indulging, not without complacency, the mood thus indicated, the library sent me Mr. Compton Mackenzie’s *Literature in My Time*. I read it with great and increasing interest as I found that starting from different points and pursuing different paths, we had arrived at the same end. Mr. Mackenzie and I are of an age: he is more concerned with the proceedings of literature, I am interested in the movement of thought which they disclose. But we are both in the throes of the same nightmare. The culture which the Nineteenth Century received and we supposed it would transmit is over and done with. We are left carrying the baby and the baby is dead.

‘Montaigne is the first French writer whom a gentleman would be ashamed

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not to have read.' That sentence of Hallam's has always seemed to me to place our nineteenth-century culture with perfect aptness. It was still the culture of the Renaissance. We had added, for historic reasons, certain moral and political requirements of our own. But in all essentials, Hallam's gentleman like Macaulay's naval officer, 'a man versed in the theory and practice of his calling, and steeled against all the dangers of battle and tempest, yet of cultivated mind and polished manners' was still the Cortegiano. And the Cortegiano is no longer required.

II

I approach the question from another side and I try to call up the picture of Bagehot and George Grote as Tired Business Men. Some years ago an international memorandum on Tariffs, of English authorship, was sent about the Continent for signature. It covered much the same ground as the Merchants' Petition of 1820, and while I deplored, I could not help sharing, the amused contempt with which foreign business men regarded it. I have always thought that one of the most remarkable achievements of our early nineteenth-century thought was the assimilation of the new science of economics into the general body of culture, as a topic within the common framework of reference. The Petition of 1820 was a theorem in economic philosophy. The Memorandum of 1924 was just the talk of bread-winners

in the 9.15. To Grote or Bagehot it would have seemed incredible that such flimsy, uninformed, ill-reasoned stuff should ever be put forward as the considered view of the commercial community of England. I do not suppose the average business man of 1820 was really more familiar with Adam Smith than the average squire with Montaigne. But if they were not in the stream, they were on the bank, they knew the stream was there. That stream seems to have plunged into a gulf.

It may reappear, as ancient culture re-emerged at the Renaissance, or the Middle Ages in the eighteenth century, and, inasmuch as modern life moves in quicker tempo, the world may not have so long to wait. The recapture of medieval feeling by the Romantics was like the re-opening of a channel long dammed by a convulsion of the past. In the mid-nineteenth century, the educated man had a clear run back to his own origins, to Homer and the Parthenon along one line, to Rome or Palestine along another, by way of Kemble to his Germanic cradle, by way of Max Müller to those misty heights inhabited by the virtuous Aryans, who seemed to bear so signal a resemblance to Rugby boys preparing for New Zealand. His education, his religion, the sight of his fields if he was a countryman, of his streets if he was a townsman, all impressed upon his mind the antiquity and continuity of his civilization, while the social order at home, the balance of land and industry, the counterchange of urban and rural ideas, preserved and

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emphasized its unity. I was thinking, while I read Mr. Mackenzie's book, how a writer, as competent and serious, would have treated Literature in My Time in 1884. Half the book at least would have been concerned with history, theology, economics, public affairs: we should read of the sensation provoked by *Vestiges of Creation*, of the impact of Mansell on an angry world and of John Mill's response. To Mr. Mackenzie literature means novels, poetry, and Mr. Santayana. Whatever hopes we may nurse of the continuity of our culture into the future, its unity is shattered.

Whether that continuity is really ended, whether 'Plato, and Dante, and Shakespeare' are, as Mr. James Stephens thinks, really finished, whether it is not that we are too nervous to face them, or whether after all we are not simply passing through one of those recurrent phases of spring-cleaning when the second-rate, the less important, the rubbish are sorted out for the back passage, the spare room and the bonfire — ἀγνώστὸν παντὶ πλὴν τῷ θεῷ. But that unity of culture is socially desirable, that it is of the very greatest importance that there should be a common framework of reference by which men of all avocations can make their ideas known to each other, will not, I imagine, be denied by anyone. And to judge by certain symptoms that occasionally come to one's notice, I am afraid we must go down very deep to build it up again. Macaulay was much incensed to find that a young peer of intellectual tastes had

never read *Don Sebastian*: he put it down to Puseyism, whereas, really, it was a case of spring-cleaning. What would Macaulay have said if he had known that some day in his own University, 'serious and professed students of English literature' would never have heard of the Flood, would not recognize a sonnet when they saw one, would not know what *encroachment* meant till they had looked it up in the dictionary and would then complain of it as a 'hard word'? Yet, from Mr I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* it would appear that so it is. I once saw a little Yorkshireman emerging, flushed and resentful, from a Committee where he had been badgered, and muttering as he went 'Beasts at Ephesus, beasts at Ephesus'. I thought it was a *trait de mœurs* worth relating at a dinner-party. But it fell very flat. What beasts? Why Ephesus?

A common vocabulary is not so difficult to create. Broadcasting and crosswords coming together have already greatly enlarged our *copia verborum*. In the last few years I have noticed that villagers now use without self-consciousness many words which twenty years ago, if they had known them in print, they would never have uttered. They may still get them wrong: an old railway porter the other day reminded me that in the eye of the law the Bank of England was a Private Interview. But that will soon be mended, and I can foresee, though I cannot quite define, the consequences that must follow when we have learnt, like the Latins, all of us to speak with the whole of our language, and to

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speaking it without shyness or resentment. In a scuffle over tickets in a Milan tram I discovered the Italian for 'Now then, none of that'. 'Basta, basta,' it ran, 'no fatte quì delle polemiche'. Broadcasting too will restore, I think, our sensitiveness to speech-rhythm and so make good, in part at least, the harm we have sustained by the decline in Church-going. The Church of England service is a great literary function, and it would be difficult to assess the atmospheric effect on our culture of such diction and such cadences reiterated to audiences, necessarily if unconsciously in a mood of special receptiveness, from one generation to another.

III

This increased command of language seems to me, in making up the account, to be the most positive advantage with which we have to reckon. Against it, I set the failure of the common stock of reference and allusion. In *Fiction and the Reading Public* Mrs. Leavis insists, with justice, on the strongly literary character of the selfmade culture of the Victorian working classes. The earnest young workman – Cooper in real life, Alton Locke in fiction – really gave himself a classical education not different in essence from the curriculum of Oxford and Cambridge. He read the great books – Milton, Locke, Adam Smith, Gibbon – and as they were written in an unfamiliar idiom he read them intensively, sentence by sentence, with dictionary and notebook, as his

more fortunate contemporaries, if of like inclinations, might have read Sophocles and Tacitus. The writings and addresses of that famous and, to my taste, very disagreeable rhetorician, W. J. Fox, are the result and the proof. They assume that 'Plato, and Dante, and Shakespeare', or at least the range of ideas which those names stand for, really mattered to the lower middle classes or the respectable working man. And the audience thought so, or pretended they thought so, too.

Was it pretence? Did Northcliffe, Pearson and Newnes only call a bluff which had really ceased to take anybody in? Not altogether. My belief, from what I have read and what I remember, is that there was, in the mid-nineteenth century, certainly to the 'eighties and even into the 'nineties, a far more widely diffused interest in the culture-bearers and their doings than we have known before or since. I cannot find it in the eighteenth century: Johnson was something of a national figure, 'Oddity, they call him', but no one else. From the 'fifties onward, I can trace a growing pride – such as I imagine an Athenian must have felt in the possession of Sophocles – in having such men among us. And this pride, or interest, went a long way down in society. I was standing on a railway platform one day in the summer of 1896 when a man, certainly not of the aesthetic class (I guessed him to be a Gravesend pilot) opened his paper and exclaimed to a friend 'Millais is dead'.

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There was about the mid-Victorian culture, in the after-glow of which Mr. Mackenzie and I grew up, a certain unitary quality, of doing, thinking and appreciating, which will be found, I believe, to be the note of all great and characteristic cultures. One can, of course, see the dangers ahead of a universal competence and a universal connoisseurship. The Victorian culture escaped them but at a cost which we are still paying. It did not run down into a universal amateurishness. But it was doubly fractured: vertically, into professionalism, laterally, along its weakest stratum into – let us adopt the later word and call it high-brow and low-brow. The warning note was struck by the P.R.B. The artists of the 'forties, Landseer, Mulready, the cartoonists of the Houses of Parliament, meant to make, and were accepted as making, a universal appeal. When the dust of the 'fifties has settled down, we find the artists out for different game. Whether the pictures on Mr. Millbank's walls were better or worse than those which a generation later his successors were meekly ordering from Rossetti and Burne-Jones is not now the question. But there is no doubt that, even to see a Burne-Jones requires some special training; while everyone, from that standing authority on art, Henry Marquess of Lansdowne, to the Academy porter could get the point of Mulready's 'Wedding Gown'.

But art, as a certain exhibition has so ignominiously demonstrated, is not our business in the world. Excudent alii! The break up of the mid-Victorian

reading and writing unity was a far more serious matter. A certain failure of absorptive capacity is perceptible in the 'sixties: in a private library formed about that time, for example, one is fairly certain to find Grote and Milman, and quite certain not to find Gardiner. The sphere of interest is contracting: it had room for the new biology – Darwin and Huxley naturally struck home on a nation still preoccupied about its religion and always fond of natural history. But the new physics made little appeal; Faraday, who died in 1867, had long been an object of popular regard; Hallam's gentleman would have been ashamed not to know, in general terms, what he, or Lyell, had done and what they stood for. Clerk Maxwell was beyond the scope of the gentleman's ideas.

One example, because it lies in the way of my own studies, has always struck me forcibly. Our national habits, the excellence of our communications and the small area within which we have to live, early combined to create a type of literature which still has a very great diffusion, the literature of the road. One of the rules of composition is that it should contain a modicum of instruction in antiquities, architecture, local history and so forth. I have constantly observed that the information thus agreeably imparted represents the state of knowledge in about 1850. I can trace Kemble and Wright everywhere – usually in fragments of long exploded theories. Isaac Taylor and, within a narrowing circle, Seebohm, were still capable of being

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absorbed; Maitland and Haverfield were not; and it would be safe to guess that Taylor had more purchasers in one county than the Place Name Society has subscribers in all England.

It is not, or not altogether, I think, that Liberal Curiosity is extinct, that Hallam's gentleman has failed out of the land. The interest, for example, which anything Sir James Jeans or Sir Arthur Eddington writes is very like the old excitements over Huxley. But curiosity has undoubtedly turned away from what was, from what always had been, its most obvious food, the art, the literature, the memorials of the past. Looking back, I think it did not so much turn of its own accord, as it was frightened off. Mr. Mackenzie speaks of 'making things difficult for machine man' as an ideal which we should all pursue. I most heartily agree. Only, if he is scared away, he will not know whether you are being difficult or not. If, as the newest culture tells us in verse of strange construction, 'the pianola replaces Sappho's barbitos' surely the right thing is to see that machine man gets good tunes on the pianola, not to take the barbitos and beat the poor fellow about the head with it, as the late Victorians of all degrees were only too prompt to do.

This vertical comminution of a universal culture into separate provinces, each of which is nobody else's business, was no doubt assisted by the development of modern studies at the newer public schools, and the gradual conversion of the Universities – by the development of competitive examina-

tion for the Indian and Home Civil Services – from studia generalia into professional training courses. They resisted stubbornly, and by their resistance did protract the survival of the unitary culture. But more and more the Cortegiano was driven back on belles lettres for his culture. One of the characters in *Sinister Street* speaks of 'the spirit, filtered down through modern conditions, from Elizabethan England. Take a man connected with the legislative class, give him at least enough taste not to be ashamed of poetry, and enough energy not to be ashamed of football, and there you are' With one very important adjustment, it might stand for the corresponding man of the 'fifties. Only we should have to substitute for poetry something much more general. And when we go back to the mid-Victorian time we find, I think, that the culture thus defined was not only less constricted in quality but more widely diffused. Brassey the contractor, was, in his way, a man of that type: so was Armstrong the engineer: so pre-eminently was Bagehot the country banker. Indeed, anyone can verify the facts for himself by taking down a volume of the *Athenaeum* at random, for any year between 1850 and 1880, observing the range of interests it serves, and then reflecting that the *Athenaeum* yielded its fortunate proprietor an income of over £7000 a year. For the general movement of English thought in the mid-Victorian period, and somewhat later, it is the prime and indispensable document and I sometimes wonder

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whether hereafter *The Listener* will not serve the same purpose, whether a unitary middle-brow culture is not coming into existence again, to gather up once more the specialisms into which Victorian culture split.

But when I try to forecast the content and animating drive of the next culture, I am at a stand. At times I feel that our troubles are only the rush and fret of a stream at a stickle and that there may be clear deep ranges close ahead: the golden freshness of the 'fifties was won by the grimness and lucidity, the set teeth and open eyes with which the early Victorians fought down their own fears. At other times, I feel that precedents are useless, that the moral continuity of Western history has been broken at last. Society in the mid-nineteenth century was still primitive Indo-Germanic society with some slight speeding up of cart wheels and looms, and it thought of itself, for the most part, less as a departure than as a consummation. The fundamental conceptions of the West – Lords and Commons, Patriarch and Family, Farmer and Craftsman, Combat and Chastity – still persisted. What is becoming of them, I do not know. What will come out of them in the next age, I cannot guess. But, to follow one line of reflection only, I doubt very much whether there can be any continuity between a civilization based on automatic child-bearing and a civilization based on regulated child-bearing. The detachment of sex from its primeval framework of social union and domestic authority,

has in my own time produced consequences so observable that I can set no end to the consequences it may still produce. Among them, perhaps, is the solution of the problem over which Mr. Mackenzie and I are distressing ourselves.

I V

This is going rather deep. More immediately, I seem to be aware of a shortening of the span of attention, an increased susceptibility to distraction, which as it proceeds must tend to make all responses shallower and less memorable. Miss Sitwell has somewhere compared the old rhythm of life to the clop-clop of a horse's hoofs; of the new, to the *brrr* of motor traffic. I am clear at least that, like books, events had a much longer life even forty years ago than they have now: they sank in, they were absorbed into tradition, whereas now they seem to bound off into oblivion like pebbles thrown on to a frozen stream. One could still see tradition being made in the ancient way, by the recital and collation of precedents, the loss of the *Victoria*, for instance, bringing up the loss of the *Captain* and the *Birkenhead*, just as culture was made by the acceptance and inculcation of the standard books, pictures, music and even journeys.

One cannot hold the newspapers to blame because they could hardly have helped themselves. It is no doubt unfortunate that capital should be committed to the enterprise of keeping the

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public mind in the easily fluttered, easily satisfied state of barbarism or childhood. But when once a race has lost the conception of Liberal Curiosity it is lost to civilization, and whether it succumbs to the boosters of the press or the terrorists of the higher culture makes no matter. Of the two, the terrorists seem to me to be the worse enemies of civilization. A true, a sound, a social culture must be middle-brow, the high-brow elements serving as exploratory antennae, to discover and capture new ideas for the middle-brow mass to assimilate. The better it is fed, the freer and more various its diet, the less likely it is to get poisoned or lose strength. The mid-Victorian culture was essentially middle-brow: in judgment it was not selective, in creation it was not masterly. But it did lay hold: it furnished a very large class – broadly, the ten-pound householders and their leaders – with a common stock of philosophy and a medium of inter-communication and as it had little or no use for books which only ‘trained critics’ could get through, so it was under no necessity of soothing the alarms of the little clerk by addressing him as a Tired Business Man.

Of one his more disagreeable characters, that is to say, of one of his characters, Mr. Aldous Huxley makes an acquaintance remark ‘She had excellent table manners. People of that class always have’. There are people who cannot afford to eat cheese with their knives or touch pie-crust with their fingers. And just as those who are habitually well fed at home are most readily

content with cold boiled beef abroad, so, one has noticed, people who are really grounded in the tradition – Saintsbury was a fine example – can take their ease with *The Green Hat* or *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* without the uneasy feeling which afflicts the others that they ought to be construing their next ten pages of *Ulysses*. They are in no danger from the terrorists, whose standard-bearer in this age seems to be Mrs. Leavis. They do not go into precipitate mourning every time the really final decease of Scott or Byron is announced. They do not quail when they hear that Miss Austen (unlike Aphra Behn) could not write, though they may blench a little when they find that Mrs. Leavis (unlike Jane Austen) can write *religio-ethical*. ‘Obsequies ain’t used in England no more, now – it’s gone out. We say orgies now, in England. It’s a word that’s made up out’n the Greek *orgo*, outside, and the Hebrew *jeesum*, to cover up.’

An attentive, discriminating and judicial attitude to literature is what we all desire to see as widely diffused as possible. I own that the popularity of *If Winter Comes* made me miserable, and what the Christ Child was doing in its blurbs I have never yet been able to make out. Perhaps that phenomenon will some day be taken to mark the nadir of our age in sense and taste. But the mischief of the sniff-brow pose, even when it does not frighten the young out of the honest, immature enjoyment, which is the lure of attention and the foundation of judgement, is that

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it makes criticism the clap-trap of a coterie and scholarship contemptible. 'It is difficult to account for the acrimony of a scholiast' though Disraeli offered an explanation which modern psychology would perhaps confirm. For Mr. Richards' own work I have a great regard. But when I compare the lucubrations with which certain of his pupils are beginning to favour us, with, for example, a piece of criticism, so perceptive, so truthful and so old-fashioned as Mr. Sitwell's *Dickens*, I foresee for Mr. Richards the fate which has already overtaken Strachey, and which of old befell the sage *quem discipuli trucidaverunt stylis suis*.

The statisticians tell us that certain phenomena, weather for instance, move in cycles of different periods, and that when the crests or troughs of two or three cycles chance to coincide, the result is a climatic Age of Gold or Mud. We are, I suggest, just now in such a trough, the coincident point of two calamities which are working themselves out. One of course was the stoppage of education in the war. I am not speaking only of the schools and Universities, but far more of that intangible instruction which forty imparts to twenty-five, twenty-five to twenty-four and so on down the line. For some years the natural processes of youthful education, the discoveries, the enthusiasms, the repulsions, the eternal dialectic of assertion and denial, were suspended in the interests of the quick decision, and of all the consequences the one that is most abundantly clear to me and my contemporaries is that

though we were probably quite as foolish as Mr. Richards' pupils we were incomparably better informed. We had heard of the Flood. Though 'no ornithologists', we did not query Miss Rossetti's statement that a robin sings in the holly bush. We were not 'serious and profound students' of anything very much, but we did not move in a great fog of ignorance, fitfully illuminated with flashes of a feigned, and unconvincing, contempt for everything we happened not to know.

The other cycle is of longer period. We are, *in hoc interim seculo*, footing the bill for the great Victorian omission. It is curious to observe in history how inexplicably things go wrong: there was for example nothing in Roman history, law or temper, to suggest that the Romans would muddle their Christian problem. I suppose an under-secretary was down with influenza, the clerk looked out the wrong precedent, and the machine once started could not be stopped. If one could take a stand in 1834, look round and ask: 'They have reformed Parliament, the Municipalities and the Poor Law: Free Trade is only a matter of time: I hear they are drafting a County Councils Bill. What will they do next?' I do not think the imaginary observer could hesitate to answer: 'Look at Brougham and his Institutes: look at Grote and his London University: they will reform the Grammar Schools. They will probably create a Board of Intermediate Education and I should not wonder if they brought Arnold from Rugby and put him in charge.'

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It was so obviously the next thing to be done, and no one thought of doing it.

V

This was the line of weakness along which Victorian culture was fractured. The Middle Classes 'the wealth and intelligence of the nation, the pride and glory of the British name' were stratified along the seam where the public schools met the grammar schools. With the social and political consequences I am not concerned. For our culture it was a major disaster. A culture is an area of intercommunication, living and alert in all directions at once, and in the late Victorian age the educated classes, already splitting into specialized interests, were dragging behind them a growing mass with no interests at all. It had thrown up the sponge, and was becoming to all intents and purposes a proletariat, and it was Northcliffe, I think, who first apprehended its existence and diagnosed its quality.

My impression is that in the decade before the war it was recovering its tone, was seeking as it were re-union with its better half. I have read somewhere that an instructive series issued about 1900 by Dent – attractive little books written by excellent hands – was a complete failure. Ten or twelve years later, a similar series but of larger range was selling like hot cakes. The peak of Meredith's influence falls about the same time and Meredith could be cited as the symbol of continuity re-

covered, because he was bred of the ferment of the 'fifties – *Richard Feverel* appeared with the *Origin of Species*: *Modern Love* is the counterpart of *Ecce Homo* – and he seemed to us in those days to have already some of the timeless quality of the immortals. I was never quite captured. But I certainly felt that, flashing through the murk, a clear note above the affectation, was the same kind of genius that one looked for and recognized in the greatest, old or new. 'No! Vernon, oh! not in this house!' is the way the women of Euripides speak, and to my ear still 'Kill Claudio' and 'Sirires, papa' come with the same unexpected inevitable propriety of the classics.

With Meredith at the top of popular recognition, Hardy still living, a prodigious absorption of the classics and the instruction provided by publishers who still professed the old faith – the faith of Knight and Macmillan – in good books; the first decade of this century was a kind of mirage of Victorian culture, a false sun that refused to set and was swallowed up in the cloud of war. I was never able to see anything profoundly original in the satire of Mr. Shaw. It always seemed to me to be the old Victorian tricks played on the old Victorian characters: most of the ideas came from the Philosophic Radicals or Ruskin and most of the jokes from Oxford or *Punch*. Mr. Wells was different. I shared Mr. MacKenzie's experience of hearing him spotted by a Wise Youth of seventeen, on the strength of *When The Sleeper Wakes*, as the great man of the

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coming age, and after nearly forty years I must agree with Mr. Mackenzie that the wise youth was right. When foreigners have recited to me their Triad, Shaw, Wells and Galsvozzzy, I have often replied 'Never mind Shaw and Galsworthy: but read *Kipps*'. Foreigners do not wish to understand us: they only want to gratify the feeling, to which Shaw and Galsworthy minister so comfortably, that they are not after all quite so much our inferiors as in their hearts they know themselves to be. And only an Englishman can apprehend the power, the depth and the penetration of Mr. Wells' social diagnostic.

Nothing, I know, is more exasperating than to be told that 'it is all in the Theaetetus'. No doubt it is – all except the application. It would not be very difficult to argue that Mr. Wells is all in the Utilitarians or all in the Christian Socialists. But the clue I find in his work, what has always interested me profoundly, and what explains, I believe, his power over the last generation, is his quest for the Cortegiano of a world which is no longer indefinite in space and contracted in time, but unimaginably extensive in time and insignificant in space. How suggestive it is that his first books should have been *The Wheels of Chance* and *The Time Machine*. Mr. Wells, it seems to me, has done more than any man to adjust the modern imagination to the materiality of its framework. No doubt it was 'all in' George Stephenson when he made the Rocket run, and 'all in' Boucher de Perthes when he identified

the flint implements of the Somme. But it was not articulated, and therefore not apprehended. In his efforts to adumbrate the new Cortegiano, Mr. Wells seems at times to have in mind something like an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner of the eighteen-thirties, at times something like a muscular Christian of the eighteen-fifties. But his diagnosis as a moralist and philosopher of what needs to be done, coincides so exactly with my own diagnosis as a student of history, of what actually went wrong, and always I can discern, hovering over Mr. Wells as he writes, the airy and graceful figure of a Civil Servant of the 'fifties, murmuring 'Porro unum est necessarium: organize your secondary education'.

When the New Cortegiano comes will he find culture on the earth? Will he be 'ashamed not to have read Montaigne?' But for one thing, I should mournfully answer no, and that one thing is, that the Cortegiana may come first. In the days of the Interesting Death-bed it was customary to inquire of the Departing 'Are your feet on the Rock?' I have an impression of increasing strength and comfort, that the women have their feet on the rock from which the men are being swept away. Women, they say, are more conservative, more realistic, more dutiful than men. Very likely. Certainly the combination is no bad equipment for the work of continuing, enlarging, consolidating a culture. Men, I feel, will be less and less disposed to take that interest

The New Cortegiano

in the subject matter of tradition, which gives the inducement to observe it further, whether as a work of art, an historic process, or an operation of the human intelligence. Women – but, there, in another minute I shall be pointing out that woman is not undeveloped man but diverse. I will therefore say no more than this. For some time past it has seemed to me that the old-fashioned quality of distinction is fading out from the writing of men and becoming more noticeable in the writing of women. I feel it in books, for example, of such different weight and quality as Miss Sharp's *Fanfare for Tin Trumpets* and Miss Wilson's *Sidney*, in Miss Waddell's *Abelard* and Miss Ramsay's *Peel*, and the only stylist of our day whom the reader instinctively matches with the great artists of the past is a woman. Culture is surely not extinct in the age of *The Common Reader*. Could its future be in safer hands than those which shaped the prose of *Flush*?

Kingdom of the Ideal: 1933

by Malcolm Muggeridge

MIST lifted from the Lake of Geneva. It lifted slowly, foaming round buildings and making them seem like phantoms. Phantom buildings with sunny domes and caves of ice – this was the Kingdom of the Ideal.

The Ideal had twisted itself into buildings which stood precariously in their bed of foaming mist, and into typewriters and roll-top desks, and into grey corridors where men and women with papers in their hands walked up and down. *Palais des Nations* – what beginnings in the academic demagoguery of Wilson! in the cunning of Clemenceau! in the cheap romanticism of Lloyd George! What a subsequent outpouring of righteousness whenever two or three were gathered together in thy name, oh! Ideal! – gathered together in churches and chapels and meeting halls to watch politicians frolic with non-party hilarity, to hear clergymen with nicknames orate, and resonant ladies, and Quakers whose eloquence, sincerity, burns without consuming, like the burning bush in which God hid. How many journeyed to the Kingdom and planted their tents! How many worshipped from afar!

Sun dispersed the last traces of

mist, and the buildings, instead of phantoms, were solid. They became hotels and neat blocks of flats each ribbed with an electric lift; a small Swiss town on a lake. Sun fetched people on to the *Quai Woodrow Wilson*. They stepped out of their hotels and neat blocks of flats, unfolding newspapers, *journaux des nations*, which they read as they strolled by the Lake of Geneva. What things they read of, these smart, dressy people, *hommes des nations*, bread-crumbs dusting their moustaches and a tang of coffee in their mouths and on their breaths! What things they read of strolling by the Lake of Geneva – chaos and terror and the shadow of a more chaotic, more terrible future. Unfolding chaos and terror in the wind that blew over the *Quai Woodrow Wilson*, they seemed somehow disraught, like furies, woman wailing for her demon lover, for her Kingdom, for her Ideal.

Pale spats modestly unfolded to reveal tender, shiny toe-caps; waisted, padded overcoat obscured fat paunch; little, plump legs trod briskly, daintily; leather satchel, earnestly clasped, bulged with papers; face and fingers were soft and slaty. Seeing his Pomeranian being dragged, ribbon'd and coated and with

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a silver bell round its neck, on a lead along the *Quai Woodrow Wilson*, he knelt ecstatically, arms outspread, to welcome him, murmuring, lisping with inexpressible tenderness, 'My little Fido! my little Fido!' – his little Kingdom, his little Ideal.

In the *Palais des Nations* people gathered – a bench of sightseers, one or two strolling journalists, attendants, a Swiss with a sword, an American taking notes, at last delegates. Venezuela held Guatemala's hand while Miss Ashplant made a speech about the traffic in women and children. An enormous starched bow protruded from her bosom like windmill sails, and trembled with her emotions. Then, when Venezuela and Guatemala had at last reluctantly unclasped their hands, a Roumanian delegate limped forward with a stick and read a report on prison reform. He read monotonously, the gold of his watch and studs gleaming like gold amongst decaying teeth. His voice droned through the *Palais des Nations*.

A man stared at a calendar. It marked the day in an enormous figure – five. He stared at it intently, savagely, as though, if he willed strongly enough, like the Blessed Elements, it would transubstantiate and become six. Six and then seven and then eight and then nine.

It was a gritty afternoon, and he longed for the cup of tea that was brought to him at half past three; a biscuit in the saucer – B.I.T. – *Bureau International de Travail* Papers were spread out, disorderly, in front of him –

printed papers and typewritten papers and scribbled papers His mind bubbled and stewed, disorderly, like a cauldron, his soul the fire that kept it bubbling, his soul the tongues of flame that licked round the stew-pan wherein boiled printed papers and typewritten papers and scribbled papers.

Tea came at half past three, and, by the next afternoon, five would be six. Thus time (and his soul) was consumed in the *Bureau International de Travail*, one of the mansions (there are many mansions) in the Kingdom of the Ideal.

Another mansion, not quite finished, immense, was ceremonially opened that afternoon. A branch of fir tree was fastened to its apex, and faint cheers rose as an orator described how the mansion was a pillar, a corner-stone . . . how children yet unborn . . . how in every corner of the world . . . Despite his zest, there was something funereal about his oration. Then a film was shown of the mansion's foundation-stone being laid some years before. Those who had laid the stone were now dead. The film confused the issue. No one knew who was alive and who dead and who yet unborn, which was corner-stone and which was foundation-stone, whether the mansion was more real than the film or the film than the mansion.

Mrs. Greener gave a dinner party, not evening-dress. Mr. Greener just put on a pair of dancing-pumps. There might be expected to be, he said, a great swing over of public opinion in favour of this and that. He had noticed

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certain hopeful signs, for instance an article in this paper, a speech by that politician. The great need was for a courageous lead. If only someone would give a courageous lead! His little, wizened face was full of eagerness, all agog, like a Puck, like a fairy. Mrs Greener chuckled. Her eyes were feverish in parched cheeks. 'It's never been tried,' she said. 'Nothing's ever been tried. Christianity's never been tried. The Ideal's never been tried.' Often she looked from her window, five stories up, across the Lake of Geneva, and longed for something to be tried. A Frenchman nodded his agreement, complacently stroking his stomach. 'We must keep on,' he said. 'We mustn't give up.' Dinner was creamy and rich. As he ate, he once more went over his calculations – salary so much rising to so much, savings so much bringing in so much, pension so much at such a time. 'Yes,' he repeated, 'we must never give up. We must keep on trying.' His wife agreed that they must keep on trying and never give up. She, a statuesque woman with thick, black bristles round her mouth on which particles of food caught, had checked his calculations, and found them to be correct. Over coffee and desert and liqueurs, a Scandinavian lady, whose face and hair were pale as moonlight, said gently that she sometimes wondered whether, with the best will in the world, they would be able to keep on trying much longer with so many great Powers outside. MacIntyre groaned, but Mrs. Hawthorn, a widow in Intellectual Co-operation, said she had no

patience with alarmist views, and that for her part she had never felt so optimistic as now. Greener agreed. 'A great swing-over of public opinion,' he said again.

In the *Café des Nations* journalists and political personages collected, talking, raking over what had happened that day. The café was hot and crowded. 'Boncour saw Simon . . . Henderson saw Boncour . . . Simon saw Henderson.' Faces, somehow swollen in the heat, in the mist of alcohol and tobacco and talk, loomed up, grotesque and unreal. 'Boncour saw Simon . . . Henderson saw Boncour . . . Simon saw Henderson . . . Boncour and Simon and Henderson went for a row on the Lake of Geneva all together.' Thus everyone whispered, looking knowing, leaning their sweaty faces close together, inwardly preparing remarks to telephone or casually let fall. They were League Circles, Opinion in Geneva, tongues o' the common mouth – yes, pink tongues, liver-laden, in a stale, unhappy mouth.

Snow came on in the evening. A man plodded home. After midnight, he thought; and he saw the white scene, like his calendar registering six instead of five. Lights round the Lake blinked through the snow. He felt snow melt on his hot face and trickle down it like tears. Corpse of the Ideal laid out now in winding sheet; and its old body, shadows of buildings; and its flickering, fanciful life, lights blinking through a snow-fall.

Why should he hate the Ideal and

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its Kingdom? It seemed absurd to hate what had no substance. And yet he hated it because it had no substance, because it was a Kingdom of shadows and sounds, because, not existing, it pretended to exist, and pretentiously, fabulously. The most terrible living things had the redeeming quality of

being alive; this was dead, and so all its virtues were vices, so it had no redeeming qualities, was irredeemable.

He plodded on through the snow, his way haunted by cold ghosts that stabbed his heart like icicles. Around him lay the Kingdom of the Ideal, white, frozen, empty.

Breakfast in Jehol

by Peter Fleming

WE sit down four to breakfast: Mr. and Mrs. Panter, young Mr. Titherton, and myself.

Mr. Panter is a very tall, very doleful man. His voice is the voice of Doom, slow and terrible; it seems to come from a very long way away. He never smiles. He has an aloof and absent-minded manner. For thirty years he has struggled in a remote place to convert heathens to Christianity and (harder still) to make the converts Christians in something more than name; you have the feeling that this has bred in him a bitterness of soul which once it was difficult to suppress. Now he has the mastery of it; but the inner superadded to the outer conflicts have left him worn out. He has no longer any interest or energy left for

anything outside the duties which he so indomitably carries out. He is more nearly a ghost than anyone I have ever met.

His wife has, and needs to have, both feet on the earth. Her manner is not nearly so sepulchral as Mr. Panter's. Though almost ostentatiously narrow in her sympathies, she is a person of great kindness. She is accessible. She reflects her husband's austerity and his controlled fanaticism, but she remains nevertheless an ordinary human being, capable of laughter and willing to admit vulnerability.

Young Mr. Titherton is the most interesting of the three. He is out there, I gather, on probation; he is a kind of apprentice missionary. Although he has lived with the Panters

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for a year, and although for hundreds of miles round there are not more than half a dozen other white people, he is still addressed as 'Mr. Titherton'. He is not, I think, entirely approved of. He is about twenty-five. His bland, slightly unctuous face becomes, when he is amused, all of a sudden facetious in a curiously disreputable way; you would almost say that he leered. He quite often is amused. He has a natural leaning towards controversy, and at meal times will gratuitously stir up trouble for himself by defending the use of the word 'damn' in moments of ungovernable annoyance, or by putting in a word for Confucianism, or by partially condoning the less respectable aspects of Chinese life. Mr. Panter, reproving him with a vehemence which he clearly finds it difficult to curb, becomes for a moment almost human.

However sternly reproved, Mr. Titherton is irrepressible. A supremely tactless man, he both makes and withdraws his heretical statements in such a way as to give the maximum of offence. 'Well, well,' he chirps, when enfiladed by a withering fire of orthodoxy from either end of the table, 'I dare say you know best. Let's say no more about it.' Then he winks at me in a very sophisticated way. This puts me in a false and embarrassing position.

Breakfast is at seven-thirty. We sit down, and then Mr. Panter says a grace. But he never says it quite soon enough for me. Try as I will, I *can not* remember about that grace. The opening words always catch me with

a spoon or a sugar-bowl poised guiltily over my porridge, while the others all have their hands folded devoutly on their laps. This makes me appear both greedy and irreligious.

After breakfast, prayers.

Mr. Titherton distributes little red books entitled 'Redemption Songs' for Choir, Solo, or The Home.' Mrs. Panter seats herself at an instrument distantly related to the harmonium and strikes a wheezy chord

'No. 275' announces Mr. Panter in an awful voice. Mrs. Panter rolls up the sleeves of her dress. We are off. . . .

The Redemption Songs do not seem to me very good songs. Their composer often expresses himself in so turgid and involved a style as to be practically incomprehensible. His syntax is occasionally weak, and even at its strongest is over-richly encrusted with allusions and invocations ('Oh Tsidkenu!' is a favourite one) which mean nothing to me. Nor is Mrs. Panter, at the harmonium, particularly adept at glossing over his frequent metrical inconsistencies; her lively but straightforward attack is based on the assumption – too often unjustifiable – that both lines in a couplet will contain roughly the same number of syllables.

However, save for some daring experiments in the third verse, this morning's Song is fairly plain sailing. Each verse ends with the lilting refrain, 'Wonderful Man of Calvaree-ee!', and we usually manage that bit rather well.

On the whole, though, the singing is ragged. Mr. Panter's voice, though

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not lacking in vigour, ploughs a lonely furrow just where we most needed co-operation. Mr. Titherton flutes away modestly and, as far as I can judge, in tune; but he stands no chance against Mr. Panter, who produces a consistently formidable volume of sound and makes a point of shouting all the holier words at the top of his voice. In all this uproar I myself am a mere cipher, for I well know that I cannot sing and it is better that I should not try. I go nevertheless through the motions, opening and shutting my mouth with a rapt air, and occasionally emitting a little sort of mew.

At last the Song is over.

A passage from the Bible is now read aloud, either by Mr. Panter or Mr. Titherton, and afterwards extracts from a commentary upon it. This is an extraordinary compilation, thunderously phrased but somewhat bigoted in conception. Yesterday the commentator launched a furious attack upon witches. It was ridiculous, he warned us, to assert that these creatures were either harmless or non-existent. On the contrary, they represented a very real peril to Church and State alike, and when encountered should be severely dealt with.

To-day he is in milder mood. Sternly, but in temperate terms, he animadverts on the folly of attaching undue importance to some popular prejudice or superstition.

He must have been a remarkable man.

After that we pray for fellow-missionaries belonging to the Panters'

denomination. A little pamphlet is produced – the Army List, as it were, of the Church Militant – and all the names and addresses on one page are read out as being those to which on this day we especially wish to call Divine attention. Yesterday they were all in Spain, and Mr. Panter, who is not too good at foreign words and when reading the commentary gets terribly tied up over Latin phrases like *vox populi*, *vox dei*, had considerable difficulty with the Spanish place-names.

But to-day it is Mr. Titherton's turn, and Mr. Titherton is much more nimble-tongued. Also he has the pleasing custom of annotating the list, wherever possible, from personal knowledge of the people whose names are on it. His manner towards the Deity is friendly and informal. He reads out something like this:

'ADDIS ABABA – Reverend Macintyre . . . MEDINA – Miss Tackle, Miss B. Flint (*I know those two ladies, Our Father, Please look on them to-day. They're two of the very best, I can tell you.*) . . . ALEPPO – Reverend and Mrs. Gow . . . MOSUL – Miss Gondering, Miss J. Gondering (*Now that printing press they've rigged up, Our Father! That's a splendid bit of work, I do hope you'll help them to make a success of it, Our Father.*) . . . DAMASCUS – Reverend Pretty, Reverend Polkinghorne, Miss O'Brien . . .' And so on, ending up with a swift and delightful transition from the Near Eastern deserts to 'ICELAND – Reverend Gook.'

Now we kneel down, and either Mr. Panter or Mr. Titherton embarks on a long impromptu prayer. Here

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again I prefer Mr. Titherton's technique. Mr. Panter is apt to be stilted and ponderous; he thanks God for 'the bright weather which obtains' Mr. Titherton is very different. Nothing stilted about him. He has a straight talk to God. He is confidential, almost racy. 'Stop me if you've heard this one, Our Father,' you expect to hear him say at any moment.

I much admire his ingenuity – far greater than Mr. Panter's – in finding things to give thanks for. Mr. Panter has to rack his brains to remember a blessing, his struggles are indeed a sad comment on human felicity. But Mr. Titherton is never at a loss. It rained yesterday. Mr. Panter would have thanked God for the rain and left it at that. But Mr. Titherton examines every aspect of the shower. Its timeliness: its cooling propensities: its value to both the flora and the fauna of the district: the damage it inflicted on the graceless poppy-fields: and last of all, just when it seemed that Mr. Titherton must have exhausted all the potential cues for thanksgiving, its effectiveness, in falling on good and evil alike, as a reminder of God's impartiality. Mr. Titherton's pious courtesy is Oriental in more than its setting.

After this there are more prayers, of a general nature; at the end of which

I am suddenly shaken out of a stupor by the discovery that I myself am being prayed for. The experience, however salutary, is embarrassing. The prayee – his mind flashing back to the ritual of after-dinner toasts – has an uncomfortable feeling that he ought to stand up, or at any rate adopt some posture other than the kneeling. There is also the haunting fear that he may have – and certainly ought – to reply.

Mr. Titherton's position, however, is almost equally awkward. Aware, like the rest of that tiny congregation, that my prime desire (since those blessed rains marooned me by making it impossible for aeroplanes to land in the river-bed) is to leave Jehol with the minimum of delay, he leads off with a request for Divine intervention to accelerate my departure. Then something – perhaps a cough from Mrs. Panter – tells him that this was not the happiest of beginnings, and in the end the difficulty of reconciling the purpose of his prayer with the laws of hospitality is overcome only by a great deal of circumlocution, qualification, and parenthesis. His voice becomes halting and apologetic. For the first time uncertainty has reared its ugly head in that comical but gallant little community.

In several ways, Prayers are rather a strain.

The Real Issue in America

by Herbert Agar

I

THIS is a bad time for making predictions about the United States. But one thing can be said with confidence: the system of capitalism in economics and pseudo-democracy in politics cannot last much longer. The United States must soon go to the Left or to the Right. On the Left, the communists are aware of this fact, and though they are still few in numbers they are putting their case persuasively before the country. On the Right there are two groups – the brutal Right of Big Business and the intelligent Right for which, on grounds that are made clear below, I annex the name conservatism. Big Business can offer no complete plan, for it cannot afford to call attention to its own moral and cultural results. It must concentrate, in good times, on its financial results; and in bad times it must keep as mum as possible. But American conservatism has a true and important plan to offer. It is my purpose to set out the meaning and the background of this plan.

There is no other concept so discredited in modern America as the concept of conservatism. This is not because the American people have

looked upon conservatism and found it bad; it is because the word has been perverted, has been taken to describe something from which the people have at last, and justly, turned with dismay. For seventy years, a 'conservative' has meant a supporter of Big Business, of the politics of plutocracy: the one type of politics for which no honest praise has been found. According to this view, Harding was a conservative; Jay Gould was a conservative; and so, ludicrously enough, is Mr. Harry Sinclair of oil fame. It may seem vain Quixotism to try and rescue a word that has been linked with such names; yet the rescue must be made, for it is not just a word, but a vital concept, that is at stake.

If it were true that America has nothing more important to conserve than the right of the money power to loot a continent, then the country might as well perish now as later, and no wise man would cross the street to save it. But luckily this is quite untrue. There is another, and an older, America than that symbolized by Mr. Wiggin, an America that lacks self-consciousness because it has been so long ignored that it is even beginning to ignore itself. That America must be redefined. Whether it can then assert itself in the

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struggle for power remains to be seen; but the conservative believes that the effort is worth making. He affirms that there was much virtue in America in the days before it was sold to a pack of gamblers and promoters. Above all, he affirms that it is still possible to build the sort of society Americans want, assuming they can be raised to the dignity of wanting anything at all, except 'prosperity'. There is the issue: is modern America, or is any united section of modern America, capable of desiring and defining a society based on principles rather than on opportunism, on a moral image of what it wishes the life of man to be rather than on a more or less regulated scramble for possessions? If the answer is 'yes', then the desired state can be approximated. If the answer is 'no', then the future history of America can be outlined to-day. But it is scarcely worth outlining.

There is a large element of truth in deterministic theories of history. If a society is morally inert, if it is not consciously trying to conform to a chosen pattern, then it will tend to function mechanically, and its future will be as predictable as the workings of any other machine. The difference between a moral agent and a machine is that the moral agent has choice. Man has the power to make himself a moral agent, but he need not use that power. If his self-awareness (his consciousness of his own desires and motives) be torpid, he will become the next thing to a machine. He will tend to turn into the 'economic man', a sort of

highest common denominator of human weaknesses; and a society composed chiefly of such units will have the minimum of moral will, of true freedom of choice. It will conform to 'economic law'. And in politics it will be dominated by a little group whose cupidity is abnormally intense, and who will therefore become the ruling class in the community.

This is not a theory of what might happen to an imaginary society; it is a description of what has happened to the United States. The United States was created, and its form of Government chosen, by men who were in fair agreement on two main points. The first point was that the widest possible distribution of property is a prerequisite for a free society. To some of the Fathers, such as Jefferson, this meant agrarianism, a world in which as many people as possible should live off their own land, doing the minimum of buying and selling with the outside world. To others, such as John Adams, this meant an interdependent community of farmers and of moderately well-off merchants and business men, with the government holding the balance between the two and preventing dangerous accumulations of wealth in a few hands. All were agreed, however, that a wide diffusion of property was the basis for a good state. And the second point of agreement was that unrestricted democracy made for irresponsibility of government. Jefferson, to be sure, thought the vote could safely be given to all the free farmers in the agrarian state he foresaw; and

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probably few men, then or now, would disagree with him. But the Northern leaders, who knew that their part of the country would not grow into an agrarian state, were for restricting the vote to people whose property gave them an active, watchful interest in public affairs. And this view was shared by the more realistic Southerners. Madison, for instance, feared that 'in future times a great majority of the people will not only be without landed, but any other sort of property'. And he correctly concluded that if these people were given the vote, the probable result would be, not that they would win rights and privileges for themselves, but that 'they would become the tools of opulence and ambition'.

Here, then, are two primary doctrines on which the United States was founded. It was thought that a state built on those doctrines would have, and might preserve, the maximum of freedom and opportunity. It was thought that a wide diffusion of property (with its corollary, the discouragement of too great accumulations in a few hands) made for enterprise, for family responsibility, and in general for institutions that fit man's nature and that give a chance for a desirable life. The founders of the United States, in other words, had a moral purpose, a conscious plan to foster a certain way of life because it seemed good rather than because it seemed the most efficient way of making money. If it had been suggested to the

Fathers that the most rapid exploitation of North America could be made by depriving more and more people of real property and giving more and more people the vote, so that as many as possible might become 'the tools of opulence and ambition' – the Fathers would probably have admitted the truth of the suggestion, but denied its relevance to their task. Nevertheless, this is exactly what happened. The vote was distributed, property was restricted, and in the era following the Civil War, 'the people' became not only the tools but the prey of opulence and ambition – whose prime agent was the Republican Party, with the Democratic Party as understudy to read the same lines when the chief was sick, or in jail.

From 1865 to 1914 American capitalism had its own way, growing both huge and unseemly. In the latter year it was ready to come of age; it was ready to stop borrowing foreign money for the exploitation of North America, and to begin lending money for the exploitation of the rest of the world; it was ready to turn America from a debtor to a creditor power; it was ready, in other words, to give the *coup de grâce* to American agriculture. Up to this time the farmer, though not encouraged to get above himself, was still a necessary part of the system. The United States was a borrowing country; Britain, the great lending power, had sacrificed her agriculture to industrial expansion, and was glad to receive payment in food. So the American farmer was encouraged to grow a surplus

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for export; and so long as America contained a large class of farmers who nominally owned their own land, there still seemed to be some point of contact between the country of the day and the country of the Founding Fathers. But this vanished when the United States became a creditor nation. The most important remaining class of small property-owners became an anachronism. The change was hastened and made more dramatic by the world war; but in any case it would have come in a few years. There was no further need of food exports to pay interest on debts; in fact, the financiers would have liked to import food by way of receiving interest on loans. But since it was not thought expedient to let the farmers starve in their fields, like the sacred animals of India, the domestic market was reserved for them. Instead of starving they went bankrupt, and would probably have been removed in some decorous fashion (in order that the United States might become a money-lending, food-importing nation on the British model), had not the whole system collapsed under the Presidency of Mr. Hoover.

Before turning to the opportunities made by that collapse, I call attention to the speed with which, during the years culminating in 'Coolidge prosperity', private property was disappearing. As late as 1896, Bryan could plead the cause of the free farmer and 'the merchant at the cross-roads store'; and there were enough free farmers and cross-roads merchants to

give the money-men their worst fright since Gettysburg. But by 1928 the farmers belonged to the mortgage-holders and the merchants belonged to the chain-store companies. And hardly anybody objected. So long as a great many people were prosperous, nothing else mattered. The farmers could grumble all they chose; the noise died harmlessly on their prairies. And if here and there a shopkeeper complained at being squeezed out by the chain-stores or the mail-order houses, he was asked if he had never heard of progress.

Instead of growing into a country with the widest possible diffusion of property, America was on her way to becoming a country with the smallest. Fewer and fewer Americans owned anything more permanent than their clothes, or than one of Mr. Insull's bonds. Absence of ownership, more and more widespread dependence on a precarious wage, was becoming the main feature of society. And yet this was popularly known as a system of private property – by contrast with Russia, where people own nothing but their personal possessions and are deprived of the comfort of Mr. Insull's bonds. This confusion between private property, and the freedom for private enterprise which makes such property impossible, has been noted by Mr. Chesterton. 'A pickpocket', he writes, 'is obviously a champion of private enterprise. But it would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that a pickpocket is a champion of private property.'

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II

I come now to the America of to-day. The point of all I have said so far is to suggest that the system which broke down under Mr. Hoover had nothing in common with the system which was created by the Fathers of the United States. It was not the old American effort which failed, but a modern American swindle: a system of private property under which scarcely anyone owns anything except his hat; a system of democracy under which (in the population-centres) scarcely anyone has political power unless he buys it; a system of finance under which the richest nation on earth, capable of supplying 95 per cent of its own wants (as well as a lavish surplus to exchange for the remaining 5 per cent), is unable to distribute its own abundance to its own victims. In other words, it is not something precious that has grown sick, but something detestable. It is therefore pertinent to ask whether Americans really want to patch it together again, or whether, now that fate has shattered it to bits, they might not try to build something nearer to the heart's desire. If they patch the old system together, merely depriving it of its worst features, they will have deprived it of the very things that made its friends love it, and may find themselves left with a system that nobody wants.

If, on the other hand, they try to build something new, the first step is to create a moral image of the kind of country they want America to

become. The communists have created such an image. It is their great strength that they know the sort of world they want to build, and that they believe it to be good. The liberals are busy collecting the pieces of Humpty Dumpty and trying to fit them into a less gruesome shape. The obvious task for conservatives is to redefine the historic purpose of America, to scotch for ever the association of this purpose with the obscenities of Big Business, and to show how the purpose can be attained in politics.

The liberal Administration, now struggling with the double task of recovery and reform, has never made clear what sort of country it wants to create. But if we judge by results to date, the New Deal will be finance-capitalism with its rewards more fairly distributed, and its knavery curtailed. Compared to what America has recently endured, this is a reassuring prospect. But what lies back of it? Is there an economic philosophy behind the N.R.A.? More important, is there a moral philosophy? Does the Administration know what it wants America to be? Or would it be satisfied to see the country merely prosperous, so long as that prosperity was fairly distributed? Already, under the N.R.A., which lets the industrialist escape the anti-trust laws, the little man is being squeezed out by his rich competitor. This is the logic of 'efficiency', of prosperity accepted as an end in itself. In a capitalist state, with a monopoly of credit in the hands of finance, if America's goal is the highest possible

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standard of living, measured in terms of income, then the system to bring her most quickly to that goal is the servile state. The only problem is whether she can reach the goal quickly enough under a sham democracy, which is really a plutocracy, or whether in the last stages it will be more convenient to substitute an open dictatorship.

The communist would agree with much of this criticism of the capitalist servile state. He would agree that there is no moral plan back of such a state, no provision for a social order which might foster a good life as well as an increasing national income. And the communist would deny that a similar charge can be brought against his own plan. For though he too would build a servile state (in the sense of a property-less state), he would have a moral end in view. In the place of servitude to finance he would put servitude to the state conceived as trustee for the common good.

If America's choice lay between finance-capitalism and the communist state, she would do well to chose the latter. But it is my purpose to suggest that a third choice is possible.

The third choice is to return to an ideal which was an important part of the plan on which the nation was founded: the ideal of the widest possible distribution of property. It is clear that since the Civil War the whole trend of American development has been away from this ideal. If the trend has gone so far that the ideal has become alien to the majority of Americans then it is too late for a successful con-

servative effort. If Americans have come to believe that a wage is the same thing as freedom; if they prefer such a wage, with its appearance of security, to the obvious dangers and responsibilities of ownership, then they cannot be saved from the servitude that awaits them. Above all, if they have reached the point where the lure of a higher income is greater than the lure of independence with its attendant risks, the conservative plan will make no appeal.

The root of a real conservative policy for the United States must be redistribution of property. But before the conservative can preach that policy he must make clear that he does not think of property as an excuse for the strong man to loot his neighbours and make a property-less nation, but as the basis for the kind of life he wants to see in America. Obviously, he must admit that property in his sense cannot be held by everyone. But if it is so widely held as to make ownership (of land, machine-shop, cross-roads store, or of a share in some necessarily huge machine) the normal thing, which sets the social tone, then property will make for stability in family and community life, for responsibility, for enterprise, for the many virtues whose names have long been taken to cover the abuses of an unclean monopoly.

Such a distribution of property is not in the line of economic drift. It must be produced artificially and then guarded by favourable legislation; for the property-system, in a highly industrialized and mechanized world, is

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self-destructive. The logic of economic development is that a society based on private property should turn into a property-less state. But such development takes place only where there is no human will to thwart it. The thwarting is quite practicable, granted the will. But the will must be a moral will; it can never be a mere economic urge toward the largest possible income. Such an urge appears to be all on the side of the servile state. To oppose such an urge appears to be uneconomic. I am by no means convinced that this is true; but for the moment I accept it as true. I am willing to grant that the return to a system of diffused property will cost money, that the nation could be made more rich at the price of an increasing wage-slavery. Nevertheless, I believe that such a return would be welcomed by a large body of Americans. I believe that not only among the farmers and the remaining owners of little businesses, small stores and factories, but among the large expropriated public, there is a desire for ownership and responsibility, a hate of the huge impersonal combine or chain. Hitherto, the American has been told that this hate is a sign of backwoods mentality, which is a lie. He has been told that progress and prosperity were dependent on Big Business, which is another lie. He has been told that these weird economic growths would not only make him wealthy but happy and wise, which is the biggest lie of all.

It is the duty of conservatives to remind the country that these things are lies, and to keep before the country

the quite simple issue, which has recently been put in a few words by Mr Belloc: 'either we restore property, or we restore slavery, to which we have already gone more than half way in our industrialized societies.' American conservatives must keep this choice in people's minds – this choice, and the knowledge that there is no middle course. Either the whole present development of finance-capitalism must be checked (and for moral rather than economic reasons), or that capitalism will go its way until property has become a myth and the nation is enslaved by the credit monopoly. The local manager of a chain-store may congratulate himself because he is getting more as a salary than he could ever earn when he owned his shop. But the salary depends on the distant workings of finance; it may be cut to-morrow if there is a panic on the London stock exchange; it may be abolished when the next slump liquidates the next unbearable pile of debts. The man is a slave, though he owns two cars and has an income weekly that a French farmer does not see in a year. He may think himself a capitalist and buy bonds in the latest sky-scraper; but the death of some pseudo-Kreuger can turn those bonds into paper. The man is a slave because he owns nothing of which the worth, or the return to him, is dependent on his personal effort, nothing from which he could find salvation if men whose names are unknown and whose faces he has never seen should happen to ruin him. He has not even the dignity that com-

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munism would give, of belonging to a state with a respect-worthy purpose, a state whose demands are related to, and justified by, that purpose. He is riff-raff. He is one of millions of anonymous servants of finance. He is not even important enough to have been given a number. His one distinction (which he owes to other men) is that because modern technology has made goods as abundant as leaves of grass, the reward of his servitude (between slumps) is not a bowl of rice but a superbly lavish mess of potage.

Such a man is the type-citizen of a world in which finance-capitalism has come to its full development. And the next logical step, having reached this pass, is communism. For in a world where ownership is more and more centralized, it will not be long before that centralization is made complete, and at the same time made sane. There is some point in having all the means of production owned by the community, but there is no point in having them all owned by the Mellon family. There is a moral argument for communism; there is a moral argument for private property; there is none for capitalism as we see it to-day. It is not the result of a plan: no man was ever cursed with such an abominable dream. It came to pass because man's avarice got the better of him, defeating the purpose for which society exists. Through a dreary time America's one service to the values she thinks she cherishes has been to take their names in vain. For that she is punished by seeing those names become a jibe for cynics. Be-

cause she never ceased praising freedom while busily at work on the chains by which finance could bind her, because she boasted of self-government while perfecting her political machines, because she jailed 'Reds' for attacking private property while she applauded the cornering of a continent by a few thousand men — it is hard to use these good words to-day in any but a derisive sense. Yet the conservative must use them. He must redeem them, and he must remind Americans that here is their heritage and that it is almost lost.

It may not be easy to recapture that heritage, but it is worth trying, especially since there is no standing still. There is no stability to capitalism. If Americans like the concentration of ownership, if they prefer wages to property, communism is their goal. A regime of Bigger and Bigger Business will have every vice of communism but not one of its virtues. It will make Americans property-less, but without the safeguard that in bad times they at least share equally; it will make them slaves, but not the slaves of a state with a moral purpose, only the slaves of a man with an itch for money. They must choose; they cannot stay where they are.

III

The first prerequisite for a return to a system of private property is that the state should reassume its basic sovereign power: the power to issue and recall money and credit. At present that power has been given to a

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private monopoly, chiefly on the plea that it is too important to trust to the politician. I feel no call to praise the typical American politician, but it is fair to point out that his repute is no lower than that of the typical American banker. Obviously, before Americans can build a decent state on any pattern, they must find a way to choose politicians they can trust. I shall come to that problem in a minute. But the root problem is that of finance. Americans talk of Big Business, but the essence of the modern concentration of property is not concentration in the hands of the industrialist, but concentration in the hands of the financier. Finance, not industry, is the present owner of America – which is natural enough, since finance has a monopoly of the national credit. But if the state takes to itself the credit-power (which is far more decisive than the power to issue currency), it will be in a position not only to redistribute property but to make sure that property does not re-accumulate in a few hands. There seems reason to hope that the present Administration may be led to break the monopoly of finance. If so, it will have paved the way for a restoration of historic America.

I said above that I would admit, for the sake of the argument, that the restoration of property might be 'uneconomic'. I made the admission because even if that were true, such a restoration would be worth the cost. But I do not believe it to be true. In the Power Age (the result of the new industrial revolution since 1914) a

state which controls its own credit-system can go a long way toward restoring private property and still produce enough goods to create a common wealth greater than has yet been known. If the property-system can produce abundance, it is not sensible to combat it on the ground that the servile state can produce superabundance. It is probable that in a distributist America a large group would choose to be truly agrarian, to live almost wholly on the resources of its own land. I believe that such a group would be a health-giving body within the state. But I do not believe that the majority which chose to live in the world of modern industrial economy need be impoverished by the prohibition of giant concentrations of property and power. A propertied America, with control over its own credit and hence over its own real wealth, has the natural and technological resources to produce goods beyond any previous dream of man. Those who deny this are still living in the nineteenth century, where they wrongly suppose the conservative to have set his heart.

The second prerequisite for a revival of private property is a government that will not sell the country straight back to its recent owners. I believe the American tradition supplies the answer to this problem as well. Self-government was a genuine American ideal, even if it has dwindled into a myth; but the founders of the United States were too sane to believe the ideal could be reached by giving the

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vote to property-less, uneducated and unstable masses of men and women. For her sins, America now finds the country peopled with large numbers of such men and women, and the government of the big cities shows how well they use the vote. They would rebel, and rightly, if it were proposed merely to deprive them of the vote, while, continuing the present economic drift. But if Americans began by breaking the monopoly of finance and by taking effective steps to make the ownership of real property the normal status of the adult man and woman, they could then make voting a privilege to be attained in one of two ways; by ownership, or by proof of some knowledge of history and politics. People who cannot qualify in either of these ways are as likely to-day as they were in the eighteenth century to be 'the tools of opulence and ambition'.

'Democracy and plutocracy are the same thing.' The point was made by Plato: to be exact, in the *Republic* it is 'the insatiable desire of wealth and the neglect of all other things for the sake of money-getting' which begets

democracy, which in turn begets tyranny; and it was made by many of the Fathers of the American Constitution. It has recently been restated by Spengler. There is no excuse in the history of great nations for denying the statement. If America would be rid of plutocracy she must be rid of the system that breeds it. It is of course her privilege to plan, and strive, for a country of responsible, instructed men and women, where all would have the vote because all could meet the reasonable tests. The fact that no people has achieved such a state does not prove it impossible. But that is her end; she will never reach it by claiming to be there already. The conservative asks that Americans admit the facts of their present plight, and act accordingly. If they reject the plea, insisting with vacant pride that they are now a nation of free, stable, property-owning men and women, a proof of democracy's triumph, then they will soon have the government that mental weaklings deserve. But they will not like it.

Four Poems

by John Lehmann

I

T O-NIGHT your mouth, as if beside me, smiles;
These two I pass, who murmur on the quay,
Cancel ten winter weeks, a thousand miles,
Regild the planes, revive your words to me.

Distinct, you turn to me by these dark trees,
Turn, but so far: I must take train to shore,
Tunnel through mountains, offer passport, keys,
Tremble to find your foreign street and door.

Waiting for Summer there, the walnut shade,
Blue nights in June, the loud, white dropping weir,
Sharply I see, by sudden longing made
Real, the air to breathe, the foam to hear.

A moment lifts on this, a moment hides;
Habitual thoughts, like tattered curtains close,
And homeward bound the cynic self derides
The heart's defeat, while morning's pallor grows.

II

THE singers wandering before the door
Come empty-handed from shut factories;
Suffering is in their faces, but no greed,
Their voices are not strong, but like the wind
Straying in gusts about the littered road.
Yesterday came three boys from an Alpine village,

John Lehmann

Fair, with brown skins, and one had a violin;
They moved like twigs that fall in a sluggish river,
They held out caps for coins, and passed by,
And the violin grew faint, as the voices now;
To-morrow these too will be gone, but more will come.

III

YET one day, waking, to emerge at last
From prisons of the brain, more iron than iron,
All mass neurotic dreads, imposed ideas,
The sick-bed nightmare,

One day, waking, simply to forget
Frontiers, the untrue thought dividing friends,
Only to see the Spring's unbroken landscape,
Green plains of corn, and darker forest green,
Mottled with farms like fruit in spreading branches,
And South and East the dazzled mountain boulders,
White fells, and streams that quiver down the slopes
Winding through towns to the extreme line of blue;

To be deaf to ghosts that wail in air for blood,
The obscene clamour of the past,
To forget the gathered armies, the machine guns,
And exchange laughter with Frenchmen in the train
Crossing the Mont Cenis, and bathe in June
With fair-haired brothers happy from the Rhine;

To hear as if new music, men and cranes,
The federated cities of the future rise;

This might be after fever to return
To even pulse and ease of no more dreams,
In a darkened room
Unblind the skylight and be clothed in sun.

Sermon by an Armament Manufacturer

IV

YEARS passed for him like movements of a spade
Digging a deeper trench than gaped before,
And he the driven coolie sweating made
Himself the captive. Once he travelled roads
That led to apple cheeks and lovers' shade,
And roads to parliaments, the roar of crowds,
A new's reel name and certain voice obeyed
By millions mesmerized. But always fear
In the last mile assaulted, and displayed
The sudden trench to trap him: just so far
Each time he stepped, no further, though he prayed
For heart to leap with all the quacks and creeds,
Frustrated on the hither side he stayed.

Sermon by an Armament Manufacturer

by W. H. Auden

WHAT was the weather on Eternity's worst day? And where was the Son of God during that fatal second – pausing before a mirror in an ante-room, or near to the Supreme Presence itself in the middle of an awful crescendo of praise, or again withdrawn apart, regarding pensively the unspeakable beauties of the heavenly landscape? The divinest of books says nothing. Of the primary crises of the soul no history is ever written. Yon citizen, crossing the street while the policeman holds up the traffic like the Red Sea. He leaves one kerb an honest man. But O, quickly constable, handcuffs out! Roll on you heavy lorries. He is Pharaoh. Mercifully exterminate this

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pest. Too late. The warning cannot be given. Its done: the poison administered, the soul infected. The other kerb is reached and our John Bull, honest-seeming, undistinguished, unsuspected, is free to walk away, within a few years to involve widows in financial ruin or a party of school children in some frightful accident.

So on this inconceivably more catastrophic occasion, no door banged, no dog barked. There was no alarm of any kind. But consider its importance. No judge's sentence had ever yet been passed. Basedow's disease has not occurred. Love. Joy. Peace. God. No words but these – No population but angels. And after – the whole lexicon of sin, the sullen proletariat of hell.

Then what of the central figure in the tragedy? First among the Sons of God. Power. No Caliph or Mikado had one grain of it. Beauty Alcibiades beside him were extraordinary plain. Wits. Einstein were a stammerer. But for him it was not enough. For him nothing was enough but the unique majority of God. That or – Ah had he reckoned with the dread alternative – unqualified ruin. Alas for us, be raised the question. The answer was to lie with Another.

O even then, when the thought first tempted, was all irrevocably lost. Was there not still time, wonderful creature, to cast it from you with a phew of disgust. It doesn't matter now. Altered for ever, and for the worse, he went out to corrupt others,

to form his notorious and infamous societies. Gone for ever were the frank handshake, the obvious look, the direct and simple speech. The Golden Age was definitely over. Language had become symbolic, gesture a code of signals. The arrangement of books on a table conveyed a shamefaced message: flowers in a vase expressed some unsavoury double-entendre. Personalities acquired a new and sinister significance, lost all but that. For or against; on this side of the ledger or on that. Gabriel and Michael – out of the question. What glorious praise. Demagorgon – safe. What shameful comment. Abdiel and Azazel – Possible. Beware, you unsuspecting couple. This is a terrible examination, decisive of your everlasting career. Here are but two colours from which to choose, the whitest white or the blackest black. Salvation or damnation at 100 per cent. Azazel chooses. What! the black? Miserable, unlucky he. He's failed. Now Abdiel. You hesitate? Quick man, the white. Bravissimo, he passes. Balked, they slink away to make their preparations. Too late for diplomacy or apologetic telegrams. It is war.

On the details of that appalling combat, history is mercifully silent. To the vanquished, unable to consider such reminiscences without a shudder, the subject is tabu: and the victors to whom all boasting is by nature abhorrent, have been content to leave the matter in a decent obscurity. But remember, they were divine, and

Sermon by an Armament Manufacturer

therefore omniscient, omnipotent. No new-fangled auxiliary arm, the value of which is realized only by few enthusiastic subalterns, no depth charges or detectors, no tricks of camouflage, no poison gas which in times of peace even generals do not see how they could bring themselves to use, no technique of deployment or barrage, can have been unknown to them. It was conflict on an astronomical scale and with the gloves off. There were no Quakers or strikers, no international red cross, no question of colonies or reparations. Where all were committed absolutely there could be no ironic misgivings.

Every schoolboy knows the result. To the rebels it was destruction. The reservoirs of the divine wrath were inexhaustible. Nothing was signed. There was no one left to discharge, so unnecessary an office. Into the fosse of hell they fell like water. Hurrah. Hurrah. Hurrah.

Yet, my friends, you know and I know, don't we, that the events I have just narrated were not the last. Would God they had been. The scene of operations was transferred to another front, to us. Impotent to attack him directly, the defeated sought to strike at God through his creatures, to wound where it be most tender, his artist's love. And to our shame, they succeeded. The world became an everlasting invalid. Of course God could have dismissed us with a snap of the fingers. One little stellar collision and . . . no more bother for him. Why not. All reason was for it. It would

have been quite cricket. But God is no eugenicist. There was no talk of sterilization or euthanasia. Only the treatment of a very merciful and loving physician. He set over us a kindly strictness, appointed his authorities, severe but just, a kind of martial law. He gave them power to govern in his name, and access to his presence in their prayers, to make their reports, and ask for help and guidance, that through them the people might learn his primary will.

And so, to-day we are here for a very good reason. His enemies have launched another offensive on the grandest scale perhaps that this poor planet of ours has witnessed. As on the first awful occasion in Eden, so now, under the same deluding banner of freedom.

For their technique of propaganda has never varied. It has been far too successful for them to need to change it. In silk clad China or the naked Archipelagoes, in the Bermudas or Brighton, in the stone hamlet among the beechwoods or the steel flats of the Metropolis, that three syllabled whisper - 'You are God' has been, is, and alas, will be sufficient to convert in a moment the chapped-handed but loyal plough-boy, the patient sufferer from incurable disease, the tired economical student, or the beautiful juvenile mama into a very spiteful maniac indeed, into whose hands modern science has placed an all too efficient axe.

I should like you just to try and imagine for a moment what the world would be like if they succeeded; if this

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lunacy of theirs with its grim fanatic theories were to spread over the civilized globe. I tell you there would exist a tyranny compared with which a termite colony would seem dangerously lax. No family love. Sons would inform against fathers, mothers cheerfully send daughters to the execution cellars. No Romance – Even the peasant must beget the standard child under laboratory conditions; motherhood would be by licence. Truth and beauty would be proscribed as dangerously obstructive. To be beautiful would be treason against the State, thought a sabotage deadly to the thinker. No books. No art. No music. A year of this and, I say, even the grass would cease to grow, flowers would not risk appearing, heifers would not dare to calve.

So you see our job. To those whom danger in God's cause makes them exclaim, like a schoolboy confronted with an ice 'How Lush' this a lucky day. God has given them extraordinary privileges. But if there be any doubters, cowards wavering like the cowl on an oast house, I say 'Go out of that door before it is too late'. Only those whose decisions are swift as the sirocco, senses keen as the finest mirror galvanometer, will constant as the standard inch, and of a chemical purity need apply.

And to these last I say, Remember. God is behind you, and Nelson, Henry V, Shakespeare, Shackleton, Julius Caesar. But as for our enemies, those rats, they shall skedaddle like a brook. Nature herself is on our side. Their

boasts are vain. You cannot threaten a thunderstorm with a revolver. They shall be trapped by the stalks of flowers. Sheep shall chase them away. Useless for them to imitate natural objects such as a boulder or a tree. Even the spade-handed moles shall declare their folly.

But mind, God first. To God the glory, and let him reward. For God is no summer tourist. We're more than scenery to him. He has a farmer's eye for ergot and tares. But O delight higher than Everest and deeper than the Challenger Gulf. His commodores come into his council and his lieutenants know his love. Lord, I confess, I confess. All too weak and utterly unworthy I am. But I am thine. All actions and diversions of the people, their greyhound races, their football competitions, their clumsy acts of love, what are they but the pitiful maimed expression of that entire passion, the positive tropism of the soul to God.

O Father, I have always praised Thee, I praise Thee now, I shall always praise Thee. Listen to the sabots of thy eager child, running to thy arms. Admit him to the fairs of that blessed country where thy saints move happily about their neat clean houses under the blue sky. O wind-mills. O cocks. O clouds and ponds. Mother is waving to me from the tiny door. The quilt is turned down in my beautiful blue and gold room. Father, I thank Thee in advance. Everything has been grand. I am coming home.

Christmas is His Day

by Valentine Dobrée

MRS. THROWER, the old caretaker, who had been in charge of the house during the family's absence, was in a tremendous flutter. Mrs. Fielding was expected back from London with her first and newly-born child, and there was no sign of Catherine, the parlourmaid, though she had been recalled with the other maids from their holidays, and was expected to help to clean and air and warm the house back to a state of welcome.

There were several futile efforts to get in touch with her, and the household remained short-handed for a week. Then steps were taken, and Lily appeared.

Mrs. Fielding was suckling Hester when a message was brought that Lily Buckle had come to apply for the post of parlourmaid, and that she would have to leave in a quarter of an hour in order to catch the last train home. The message was given with some diffidence, as it seemed an awkward moment for interviews. But really, it wasn't an awkward moment at all, because Mrs. Fielding, in the first flush of mother-

hood had enormous pride in her functions.

Lily was brought up in haste to the shaded room, and stood stock-still where she had been pushed by the maid. She held her handbag and umbrella in her arms as though she might lose those marks of identification in such strange surroundings, and she were determined never to let them go except by overpowering force. She sat down, a menacing figure, square and dark, like some crustacean, her face obscured by a deep-brimmed hat, her legs encased in rubber wellingtons. In her agitation she began a defensive breathless wheeze which gave Mrs. Fielding an opening.

'I hope you won't get that cold of yours worse coming out on a night like this, but I see you're well shod. I suppose you took the short cut?'

'I thought I'd have to give it up and come by daylight, but I met some folks what told me the way.'

The warmth and dimness of the room eased Lily; she stopped wheezing. Downstairs in the brightly lit kitchen she had been miserably aware of her

Valentine Dobrée

splashed coat and boots, but darkness released her as water the land-bound fish. At first she answered in monosyllables; then, as though her tongue had slipped back into its socket, she gave more information. She had a five years' character from her first place, and her late mistress was within calling distance.

Even in the gloom she didn't seem very prepossessing, but at least she was different from Catherine. Catherine had been very pretty, and terribly refined, and rather irritating. Catherine wore two pairs of gloves when she cleaned silver; her face was in continual protest against her hands however unwillingly they misdeigned themselves. A strong village girl might turn out more reliable and less irritating. It seemed to Mrs. Fielding that Lily Buckle had at least these qualities, and at any rate they would be living very quietly for a few months so there would be time to get the girl into good ways.

'I was Daily at Mrs. Defosse, Mam. Wet or fine, never missed a single day, as she'll tell you herself.'

Mrs. Fielding had had an easy life, she didn't doubt that this was just the right girl to serve her, nor was she the least surprised to find her. Lines of such girls seemed to radiate from her for her endless support; if chance or incapability removed one there were others ready and eager for the place. Ridiculous though this attitude can be, it made her unsuspecting and kind to those round her in a way impossible to Mrs. Thrower, and though stern critics

and moralists could not value her easy-going ways, they had this solid advantage that people remained for the most part what she thought them to be, and what began by being artificial ended by being real enough.

She smiled to herself as she sat later writing to Mrs. Defosse, not because she thought there was anything absurd in her conviction that an admirable domestic worker had just applied to be taken into her house, nor because she felt complacent, but because Lily had brought her back to a mood which made everybody seem incongruous, above all herself. There she sat, unable to connect the calm housewife, ordering the ways of those about her, with the anguished distraught creature that had so lately been delivered, and who had felt a dog-like devotion to the doctor and nurse that had helped her. She knew what it was to be purely an animal. She had seen herself reflected in a long glass walking about with her night gown lifted high, her whole body exposed, reduced to a beast with the single aim of unburdening herself of the child.

'They say after a child is born you forget it quickly, forget the whole business,' she thought, 'but I mustn't let myself forget. Oh, I hope I shall have another before I do forget.'

Then she took off her dress and began doing exercises to restore her figure, and thought with some irritation that unless he fell in love with some other woman, her husband might not notice if she regained her former shape or stayed always a little distorted.

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It was Thursday, and Lily was to come that very Saturday, if nothing was wrong about the character. Mrs. Fielding could no longer put off her drive to call on Mrs. Defosse, though it was a grey day with a wind frost, and she had no inclination to go out. After many inquiries she turned down a lane overgrown with grass and came to a neglected looking farmhouse, whose front gate had come unhung and lay half hidden, rotting in the grass

For the first moment she thought the house was deserted, but knocking at a side door she found herself suddenly face to face with a shrunken, wrinkled old creature who was trying to protect her head with a large silk handkerchief, and raised one hand in alarm against the searching wind.

Before Mrs. Fielding could explain her mission, or had had any answer to the inquiry, 'Does Mrs. Defosse live here?' the old lady had stepped aside, and, to her visitor's unaccustomed eyes, had faded away back into the gloom like the image on an unfixed photograph that darkens to nothing on exposure. It was only when she heard the request, 'Be so kind as to shut the door', that Mrs. Fielding made any attempt to follow down the vault-cold passage, and at length seated herself in a small musty room, and began to remove her gloves. The opening of the door had stirred-up the air in the house; Mrs. Defosse shivered as she sat down trying to fold herself up. She felt some strange uncomfortable element had invaded her house, and had made her again aware of the discomfort of living.

It was hardly possible that a comfortably-off, contented, youngish woman could be very easy in the presence of one who carried about her all the marks of decay. It needed courage for Mrs. Fielding to start off with her inquiry.

'Lily Buckle, whose people, I believe, live on your land, has applied to me for the post of parlourmaid. She gave me your name as reference. Did you find her sober, clean, industrious, and honest?'

She spoke very fast, as though all this was just a matter of form, but blushing to be asking questions of another human being which she would resent having asked about herself. 'Am I sober, clean, industrious, and honest? Am I this paragon?' But one couldn't run a house without some member of the household having those virtues, and did not the whole world take all that for granted, and assume that she was handsome, gay and gracious?

'Eh?' said Mrs. Defosse, putting up both her hands to her ears, as though showing a way to those wandering words to hearing and understanding, then remembering that one ear was better than the other, turned her head beckoning invitation to her left ear.

There followed something of a tussle. It seemed impossible to make the old woman speak out. Her grunts and ehs? were like sentences of commas, colons, interrogations, full-stops, with blanks and no words to furnish the line. Question after question was remodelled, transformed, and put forward again, with little result. Mrs.

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Defosse sat with her head down; her arms folded over her breasts. Any attempt to answer was accompanied by a quiver passing over her face and a lifting and straining of her head. After each effort her head dropped back again, the silk handkerchief giving her the effect of a candle being snuffed out. Her deafness, blindness, and inattention were chilling, and induced such caution in her companion that she found herself holding her breath; the life of the old lady was diminished to a small, fitful flame.

Mrs. Defosse could not praise Lily; praise needs some exuberance. Lily's character lacked form and substance, like a punctured balloon.

'Her, her?' Mrs. Fielding was persevering, 'Did you find her quick at learning?'

Mrs. Defosse brought out an unexpected 'Yes.'

'Then there'll be no harm in trying her,' said Mrs. Fielding.

But here the pattern of Mrs. Defosse's mind showed itself crossed, weft and woof inextricable. 'Who?' she inquired putting out her hands as though she was to be given something.

'Why! Lily Buckle!' cried Mrs. Fielding, frustrated as though she had failed to shove Lily into the vacant place in a game of musical chairs, 'It's no good,' she thought, 'I must drop the subject; probably the old lady doesn't care to speak of Lily since she must belong to a warmer and more comfortable day.'

Poor girl, she must have lost every scrap of optimism if she had ever spent

five long years in the house in its present condition. She dismissed the idea as absurd. There would have been nothing to do, but sit, and listen, and gauge what more time had gone by; learn to become a living clock; for the fire was a miracle, two small pieces of coal that kept each other warm in a tiny grate, and certainly they could not be interfered with. It seemed to her that even now Lily must be demanding release from such a past. Anything young must have ached to erupt like a Jack from this box. And what a depressing room, with bars to the window; probably it had been the pay-room when the farm had been prosperous. It must face south, for the wallpaper was completely faded and burnt where the light had got to it. In the yard there was a row of empty shut-up buildings, and the battered door of the barn swinging backwards and forwards in the wind made a noise like a cat locked out.

Mrs. Fielding felt her deep depression swelling to tears. She must go away from this awful place. Baby would need her soon. As to Lily's character, it had become superfluous; they were fellow fugitives.

There! Firm in her decision to employ Lily, she began to take her leave. It had such a cheering effect on her hostess that the old lady announced with a slight questioning curve, 'Last week, another lady came for Lily Buckle's character. She didn't suit. I thought at the time she wouldn't suit. I said to myself that someone else would be inquiring soon. I was waiting. And

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you see I was right They will come? I've had as many as three in one day. They will come.'

The derisive tone seemed all directed against the suppliant ladies. It was clear. They came, there was nothing rare about them. The words they spoke no longer penetrated the fastnesses of Mrs. Defosse's mind. There was nothing distinctive in their visits. She resented them. Life was still prodding her with its clumsy fingers.

Mrs. Fielding smiled uneasily. Had the story of difficulties in getting employment Lily told been true? Had everyone rejected her, or had Mrs. Defosse become confused as to numbers. She thought of Mrs. Randall, Mrs. Smythe, and Miss Trollope, who were always changing their maids. Perhaps the whole county had been greedy for Lily and her five years' character. She laid a detaining hand on the old woman's arm, before she tried the last despairing question, 'But do you think she will suit me?'

In vain; Mrs. Defosse was too eager to show her visitor the proper way out to be detained. She opened another door which led to the main part of the building and the front entrance. At that moment there was a crisis in the house; several doors banged, and Mrs. Defosse's skirts bellied large with the sudden draught. She freed herself, and hurried down the long stone hall in front of her visitor, and began undoing the heavily bolted door.

The sight of her frail bent figure, with the head bowed down came as a reproach to Mrs. Fielding for her

egotism. She dropped the exasperating pursuit of Lily, and followed her, floundering into sympathy.

'It's sad to think of so many lovely old houses being left empty these days,' she shouted, as she noticed a nice bit of carving on the stairs. 'We know what it is. We had to leave my husband's old home and get a smaller house. It's easier to run, but it doesn't seem to belong to us. We're strangers.'

What was the good of directing this spate of words to deaf ears? But no; suddenly, just as Mrs. Fielding was going, the old lady spoke:

'I'm the last,' she said, 'I was born in this place. I've lived here all my life. It's been a good friend to me. I had two sons. They're gone. My little girl died when she was only six years old. There's nothing here any more. And now my cat's gone, and I can't bury him. The frost's made the ground too hard. He's there,' she pointed to a door, 'till the thaw comes. Noah's his name, and it may seem wrong to say it of a dumb beast, but, I miss him most of all. He had his ways, soft nice ways, best suited to an old woman.'

And Mrs. Fielding understood how Lily's five years meant nothing to the old woman who had seen so many come and go, golden lads and girls. All this knocking and asking about such an ephemeral creature hardly scratched the consciousness of one who was living back and back. It was the dead cat, the desolate house alone that kept their shape and substance in those dim eyes. In the light of this discovery, Lily was like an un-

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wanted belonging that had been thrown away, and was always being unseasonably returned to be restamped with Mrs. Defosse's hall-mark.

As she took the dry withered hand she heard the barn door making its imitation of a cat locked out, and shivering she began to move to the car.

Mrs. Defosse stood for a little while, her head shaking from palsy. Her last caller was out of sight, but the sudden flooding of great headlights blinded her and she staggered back, bolting the door on the latest claimant of one who had been, so inexplicably, her Lily. She felt chilled beyond all possibility of keeping her trembling limbs together, and in the growing darkness she found her way up to bed, leaving her door ajar so that Noah might join her. Recent events had vanished as an early morning fog.

It was the last character she gave to Lily Buckle, for two days later, there being so signs of life about the place, the police broke in and found her still dressed, lying dead under the eider-down.

On the following Saturday, before Mrs. Fielding realized what she had done, Lily became her Lily, our Lil, the Priory Lil. For Lily turned out to be what is known as a 'caution'. And, good heavens! she was plain; not in the way of some ugly people who look like another animal; bird, horse, rabbit, or fox. Her great mat of coarse hair might be a little prehistoric, but she was quite

human; human in that raw discoloured way which makes pelted beasts in comparison look so much more presentable.

Lily arrived excited with the news of Mrs. Defosse's death. The talk in the kitchen rose to a high tide that threatened to undermine the daily routine, and Lily went about with flushed face and shining eyes.

'She is decidedly "top-size",' thought Mrs. Fielding, reminded by the surcharged cheeks of those beets and carrots which no arguments could induce the gardener to produce young and tender for the table, and which triumphantly took prizes each year at the local flower show.

The Kitchen, too, soon placed her to their satisfaction. They saw most of the natural Lily.

'Girl's soft,' proclaimed Mrs. Thrower, who had come up from the village to inspect her. Mrs. Thrower was quite fearless in her judgments. Once this had been said, though no one else would have said it first, no other explanation was ever given, for her actions; the only variation was that the kind-hearted added, 'Poor girl!' or, 'Lord save us!'

But Mrs. Fielding was the first to become really aware of her. She had to attend the inquest on Mrs. Defosse, as the last to see her alive, and this kept the visit to the old lady fresh in her mind and sharpened her feelings for her child. Death had come uncomfortably close and she had time enough to brood about it. It was through the child that she first came into contact with Lily. The baby was the active

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agent in forcing the overgrowth of Lil in the household; it wouldn't have happened in a childless house.

After a few days no sooner had Mrs. Fielding started to feed her baby than Lil would appear, with some new-found, and urgent domestic problem to be solved, or bursting with suggestions for all sorts of improvements, such as keeping the silver in a more handy cupboard. Once the urgency was proved, she stayed, deaf and mute, loose and overflowing, the small dark eyes fixed with covetous absorption on the sucking child. At first Mrs. Fielding, in her own absorption, did not notice her. When she did she was powerless to find the right words to shoo her away. Lil seemed to think that this was her privilege, established on her first visit, but Mrs. Fielding began to feel uncomfortable and shouted angrily to drive Lil from the room. Then she gave orders to the nurse to keep the girl out; so Lil took to shuffling and whispering on the landing outside her room.

'Send her away,' said Mrs. Fielding.

Nurse hurried to the door and shut it behind her before she dealt with Lily.

'No, no,' she said, sharply, 'it's no good. You must come back later. You can't speak to Mrs. Fielding just now. She doesn't want to be disturbed.'

'But she said as how if I didn't know, I was always to ask her.'

'No, not now.'

With this opposition, the politer Lily vanished.

'Ow, I tell you I must,' she cried. 'She said as how if ever anything got

broke I was to tell her, and not to hide it. Little ole cat, up on table, and broke best tea cup.'

'Well, you can't tell Mrs. Fielding now. I'll tell her later,' insisted Nurse with loud impatience.

'Is 'e sucking? I must see her. Little ole cat . . .' began Lil again.

Nurse turned tail, and retreated into the room taking the precaution of noisily locking the door.

'What's all this nonsense,' Mrs. Fielding demanded. 'What's come over the girl?'

But Lil continued to haunt the passage by her mistress's room, and Mrs. Fielding felt she could do no more than keep her out though the heavy breathings and brushings against the door distressed her, and it seemed no mere coincidence that her milk began to dry up, and there was talk about weaning the child.

For the greater part of the day, Lily was presentable, and it was only when she was provoked that the country half-wit became really noticeable. It seemed like a deliberate spite against herself, for, in a moment, like an expert quick-change artist, she would knock her cap to one side, ruffle her hair, swell in the rump, so that her tight black skirt, shiny in the seat would gather concertina-wise a little higher and show white gaps. Then Mrs. Fielding could have shaken her, shaken her free of all those idiotic coverings, or shaken her straight, back to the fairly decorous and efficient Lily, who would just do, so she thought, until the summer came.

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'It's all wrong having servants at all,' she said to her husband. 'Now that everyone can read and write and are quite likely to have the same interests as oneself, the position is quite unreal. It would be difficult to find three people amongst one's friends one would care to live with. We get so used to expecting the maids to be miracles of tact, industry and kindness that it takes a Lily to make us notice it.'

And then one day Mrs. Fielding saw a new side to Lily, which gave a recognizable shape to her character, and which made her melt towards the girl.

It was Nurse's afternoon off, and Mrs. Fielding was straightening something in her room after a final inspection of Hester, who was being weaned and was fretful. Seven o'clock had just struck; a whole hour before dinner. She enjoyed the feeling, for the first time that day that she could take stock of her happiness, and make it flow over to the future; she felt, too, the first stirrings of spring, all good things were still in front of her, and death had shrunk away beyond any horizon. She opened her window wider. The air was mild, and the moon shining. She stayed for a few minutes before she went back to the door to listen. She didn't notice that she was always saying 'Ssh!' these days and listening. Again, she could not resist the impulse to go back to the nursery. She stopped at the door to listen, and heard a heavy measured tread of someone pacing up and down in the room, and someone humming. On opening, she

saw that Lily had got Hester, and was walking her up and down in the firelight. The unmistakable, massive figure seemed to shelter and encircle her so amply and comfortably, that Mrs. Fielding's furious heart-beats soon slowed down.

'Thank you so much,' she whispered, putting her arm round the girl, 'I thought she'd gone off all right.'

But Lil stopped; with a grunt, as though caught out, turned away, laid the baby in her cot, and, muttering under her breath, was gone.

Hester started whimpering and it took a few minutes to settle her down.

'Now, that was nice of her,' Mrs. Fielding thought, and when Nurse came in at ten she said to her, 'I do believe Lily has the makings of a good nursemaid. She really seems to like children.' But the tight look on Nurse's face warned her to say no more.

Hester occupied Mrs. Fielding entirely; more even than when she was feeding her, but though she felt Hester's being so deeply, for many days she thought idly, vaguely and almost exclusively of Lily. It was as though pity for the girl added fuel to the tenderness she had for her child. Poor Lily, how dreadful it must be to be so ugly, so young, and undesired.

It was Nurse who snapped when Mrs. Fielding had praised Lily for some attention, that it would do Lil all the good in the world to have a child. But she said it so spitefully, so meaningly as though such a thing could only happen to Lily in a disgraceful and punishing way, that Mrs. Fielding was

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shocked, and showed it enough to make Nurse sure that she had a prude for a mistress.

Mrs. Fielding thought it was true there was nothing Madonna-like about Lily, you couldn't idealize her or make her symbolic; she would be a fine breeder, quite human, but taking her place unquestionably with all the other animals that came out of the ark. It was this quality in her that upset Nurse, and it became a real grievance that Lily was always poking her nose into the nursery, and calling and making noises to the child as she lay awake in her pram outside the window. 'I see the girl,' cried Lily

'I'll see you . . .' muttered Nurse, and went off to lodge another complaint. The house couldn't hold them both.

Soon Mrs. Fielding caught the itch to rid herself of the girl, but somehow it didn't seem quite fair, though it made Nurse unbearable. As though it were the simplest matter in the world, which she knew it was not, she said to her husband almost daily, 'I must get rid of Lily Buckle'.

It grew into a plant, 'I must get rid of Lily Buckle. She is the limit. She'll demoralize everyone. She must be reading all my letters, for she told Cook that the Vanes were coming for the week-end before I told anyone, even you. And the others say that she has eaten all the chocolates left over from desert the night after Mrs. Salmon came to dinner. Altogether she is awful, quite awful. Though I can't help feeling sorry for the girl. What future can she have? but really

this place isn't suited to her. A life in the fields would have been better for her. She'd have made a good French peasant, but women don't work on the fields here now, and she certainly belongs to a time when things were simpler.'

'Get rid of her,' said Mr. Fielding 'I thought you had made up your mind. There's no need to feel sorry for the girl. She'll soon find another place. Why do you let her worry you?'

And there seemed no answer.

Mr. Fielding turned out to be right. There was no need to be sorry for Lily. Nurse very soon reported that Lil had a sweetheart, a perfectly presentable sweetheart, who was known to be sober and hard-working; the best of that wild family, 'Yes Bob, not Bill, Withers'.

Mrs. Fielding caught sight of him, resplendent in his mauvish Sunday suit, a purebred local, with white-gold Saxon hair, swinging a stick, waiting down the back drive to take Lil walking and courting.

Old Mrs. Thrower, who might have been Mercury for the haste she made to be first with all news, got on her bicycle with the first half-dozen eggs her new pullets had laid, to offer them personally to Mrs. Fielding, so that she might get past the kitchen and be early in telling of Lil's success. Lil's status of 'soft' was changing to being 'a deep one, a dark one'. That Lily should indulge in sweethearts seemed

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almost a crime to Mrs. Thrower, quite enough to make her lose her job. She suggested two of her nieces who had just left school and were on the look out for places. True, they were completely untrained, and before Lil's coming she would not have dreamt of putting them forward; but once Lil had filled a place, it seemed to her that the standard was lowered. Mrs. Fielding had almost screwed herself up to giving Lily notice, but this unfairness to the newly courted girl determined her to stick to her, perhaps to see her happily married. From all accounts Bob Withers was indeed a catch; very shy, but much trusted, and liked by the farmer he worked for. So Mrs. Fielding spoke to Lil, told her how pleased she was, and Lil might claim at last to be safely installed.

It was foolish to regard Lil as an easily solved problem. All of a sudden something happened to her. She seemed not to feel the limits of ordinary domestic service. She would catch Mrs. Fielding's eye and grin whenever she could. And Mrs. Fielding felt it was her own fault for breaking her rule of not talking to her maids about their private affairs unless they themselves first approached her.

Lil began carolling in a loud unmusical, but ambitious voice the whole day long and no hint of reproof could stop her. Mrs. Fielding thought guiltily that perhaps she had herself led Lil on to overstep the bounds.

Singing had been Mrs. Fielding's own special delight. One morning following a silence of many months,

she had opened the piano, and had plunged again into her music with great zest. And it was after that first pleasurable re-discovery of her voice that Lil, too, felt the urgency of using her lungs. In a few days Mrs. Fielding had to give up music altogether. It was infuriating; a few bars on the piano, a few notes of song, and as furiously as an ill-timed alarm-clock another sound broke in, and the wildest, maddest duet began.

Cook very critically spoke of Lil's efforts as blaurning. She couldn't for a moment admit that she sang as a decent christian did in church. 'She's a real heathen,' she said. Cattle blaured because they were uneasy, and Lil and her kind did the same.

For one moment Lil was supposed to have faltered in her faith to Bob Withers. Mrs. Thrower gave one of her well known interpretations. The old woman put it about that Lil had been very cross when, at the first chance she had, she had jokingly informed Smith the gardener about Lil's young man and his softness for her.

Mrs. Thrower adopted a slightly acid tone in her address to Lil. She had come to the point of thinking her two nieces had been overlooked all on Lil's account, and she took every opportunity to tease her. Lil's position being changed, she was exposed to all the shafts that were directed at desirable, deep girls.

'You should have seen him when I told him,' said Mrs. Thrower, having caught Lil passing at her garden gate. 'He looked as though you could have

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knocked him down with a feather.'

'You didn't tell him, did you?' demanded Lil aggressively, poking out her head like a tortoise from her shoulders. 'It isn't your business any way whoever it is I walk out with. Folks should mind their own business, or they'll come to harm.'

'Indeed I told him,' cried Mrs. Thrower, delighted at getting a rise out of her. 'I thought it my plain duty to warn him, so that he shouldn't go breaking his heart for a fine girl like you. Now, that would be a pity, don't you think?'

'He's a sweetheart of his own. She got his ring,' answered Lil, a little doubtfully.

'I don't know nothing about that, nor think neither. All rings aren't wedding rings, though some of you girls make as how you thought so.' declared Mrs. Thrower, turning from her gate.

'It's bin a good dry; couldn't have bin better,' she added as she picked up her clothes-basket, and waddled off to collect her washing from the line.

'Fine and handsome yourself,' screamed Lil as she moved away. The clotted cheeks had become gashed with colour.

And because the sky showed great blue patches between the racing clouds, and the snow-white clothes danced swollen on the line, and her day's work was nearing its end, Mrs. Thrower could very well afford not to hear Lil's explosion, and wave her hand in a friendly farewell, just as though nothing but sugar plums ever entered her mouth.

Stories came thick and fast; the same stories that are always told. The only new thing about them was that they were told about Lil this time. How Bob Withers was sick and silly with love for the girl, and how she wouldn't come in to time at nights; how he lurked about the grounds after dark, with no sense left in him, careless that the gates were unlatched, so that the rabbits came in and did great damage. And the gardener vowed vengeance, and threatened to find a way to scare the life out of Bob, next time he trespassed at night.

As for Lil, a wave seemed to lift her up, and set her on high. She might have been a cinema star, she was so much the talk of her neighbours. It is usual at this moment for ugly ducklings to turn into swans, so it must be said here quite uncompromisingly, that nothing of the sort happened to Lil. To an impartial observer she was not a jot more handsome, on the contrary she was if anything more truly ugly, because she had become more positive; she could not be ignored. Bob Withers, at best a stocky little chap, looked shrunken, and small, and shadowy beside her. He presented a spectacle which might have been normal in the insect world, but which is offensive to human beings. But does it really matter that Lil was no lovely Aphrodite? At any rate the same wave lifted her above her fellows and she is discovered usurping the shell. Lil was not the sort to see her own reflection in other people's eyes, and so she missed becoming a swan.

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Not only was Lil elated, she was frisky.

'Lily, Lily,' murmured Mrs Fielding, helplessly, every time she set eyes on her, and almost thought of speaking to Bob Withers to bring on the idea of marriage.

It was the Sunday she had to fetch the afternoon milk from the farm, which was just across the meadow that lay in front of the house. Mr. Fielding had planted an avenue of limes across it the autumn before, and Lil began a sort of dance with the saplings for partners, winding her way in and out between. She had rushed down the steep little path that cut into the avenue with a great shout, swinging the milk can round and round as she began to encircle the trees, then more furiously. As she lifted her arm she jumped, and gradually her skirt worked up unheeded so that her white drawers fringed it. Mrs. Fielding watched her from the window, and her heart sank.

Once Lil was at the farm she had to wait, for they weren't finished milking yet. She made the cowmen laugh as she made her way to the place where the bull was stalled and kissed him on his cold damp upper lip.

'There be no grain of fear in yer body,' one of the men said admiringly. 'Do yon ole man'd be first to sniff it out.'

Lil laughed and gave him no answer. She took the milk and being so burdened had to walk back more

staidly. But instead of taking herself and the milk round to the back quarters, she hung the can on the maimed arm of a statue that flanked the side of the grass plat, and proceeded to have one last fling, by rolling wildly over and over down the slope till she reached the ha-ha above the meadow. She lay there for some time flat on her back as content as she was when she was still a child. Bob Withers, who saw her from his hiding place in the little copse that skirted the field, waved to her to come to him, and when she made no response almost decided to join her. With no signs of guilt or haste she got up, yawned as though she were just awake, stretched herself and prepared to take the milk to the kitchen.

Such behaviour Mrs. Fielding would never have stood from any of the other maids, but it didn't seem any good making rules for Lily.

'I shall put up with her until after your people have been,' she told her husband, 'and then I suppose I shall have to look about for someone else.'

But Lily had to leave more quickly than was intended. First, to everyone's astonishment she began to avoid Bob; never actually telling him that she had done with him, but changing her days out with the other maids, never letting him know, so that he would hang about expectantly for hours, way-laying anyone he thought who might have news of her. Then, one day Lily's nose began to bleed, unexpectedly, extravagantly, so that she was laid up

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for a few days. She abandoned herself hopelessly, groaning loudly, so that she could be heard all over the house. A visit from the doctor produced the advice that she should be sent home immediately; to rest, as he put it rather ironically Mrs. Fielding shirked seeing her, or saying good-bye. She settled it all in her mind by being very generous about her wages, paying her for two extra months.

The whole household sighed with relief when Lily had gone, though the maids would have to manage as best they could with visitors expected soon. It appeared that Lil had been a boss, a bully, a glutton, and a slut. The only people who regretted her in the least were Hester and Mrs. Fielding.

'I suppose I miss her in the same way as a stray dog which might have made itself at home and got into good condition,' Mrs. Fielding said superiorly.

Mr. Fielding said, 'I wouldn't mind betting you that Lil thought herself something very special. I've seen, just lately, a look in her eyes as though she knew she'd got the goods, and she thought you all pretty poor things.'

'Oh, well,' cried Mrs. Fielding. 'There's one thing about her, she was never cheeky.'

'No, I didn't mean that,' said Mr. Fielding. 'Coxey is what the people round here would call it.'

And it did seem true, for Lily continued by rumour to be more odd than before. She behaved like some haughty beauty to Bob Withers, whom

she refused to see more often than once a week. The way he hung about at the cross-roads near her home kept the scandal alive, and Lil still in the limelight.

Later the Priory was shut up, and the family went up to London for the half of May and part of June. Before they left, Mrs. Fielding had a letter from Lily's mother; a hard, proud letter, saying that Lily had got herself into trouble, but that she was writing to tell Mrs. Fielding that neither she nor Lily wished for the marriage with Bob Withers, 'Though he do torment the life out of her to make her his wife, but two wrongs won't make no right, and a fellow so silly in love will make no good man for her'. The letter went on to say that it was known that Mrs. Fielding was a kind and fair lady, and the girl must live till her time came, her father couldn't afford to keep her. Would she give Lily a chance by providing her with a character for honesty and hard work? That would get her a job in Bury, where it was said there was always a great demand for servants.

Mrs. Fielding was struck by the letter. 'A very nice woman I should think.' She wrote a guarded but quite useful reference, and it was only the rush of packing up that prevented her from going off to see Mrs. Buckle.

In London, just before their return home, they heard of the tragedy. Each maid heard in turn from their families. 'Bob Withers has drown'did hisself. Bob Withers has drown'did hisself.'

He had done it in the pond outside

Valentine Dobrée

Lily's people's cottage, and his body was not found for three days; all the while the old couple had been using the water of the pond for drinking.

Mrs. Thrower wrote to Nurse She began:

'Dear Nurse,

'I hope you are well, as this leaves me, though it's been uncommon wet for the time of year. Bob Withers has drown'd himself and that girl Lily Buckle is back home again to be at the inkest, by special request. They do say. . . .'

And Nurse broke off to remember that she had heard that more than one of Bob's family had done away with themselves, and she explained to Cook that it ran in families like twins and madness. And they said all they could say; how that Lil was bad not to stick to him when he wanted her, bad not to marry him, bad to drive him as crazy as herself, bad to be carrying his child, and bad to be so heartless now he was lying cold.

It all seemed so strange to Mrs. Fielding that she could hardly believe the story, but she felt furious against Nurse, as though she were bringing false witness against Lil, when she said in the hard thin voice of the staid minority, that Bob Withers was fated to drown himself, and that it was better then than after, better in every way than that he should live to have more children in marriage with half-wit Lil.

'Better?' said Mrs. Fielding, and made her way to her bedroom, where she burst into tears.

Even the schoolboys were cruel to Lil, and threw stones at her. She took no notice except to hang her head and draw herself together as though she were seeking the protection of her shell. They soon left off when they found there was no fun to be got out of it.

Mrs. Fielding thought she could not go and see Lil after all this, because she felt Lil didn't want her sympathy or what it might very well look like, mere curiosity. She saw her once in the autumn, very big with child on her way to the market town, and waved half-heartedly to her, but Lil didn't notice her. She wore her hat in the same old way, half down over her face, and she looked as far as Mrs. Fielding could see in such a fleeting glimpse, much the same as usual, only glummer, more shut in, and perhaps a little thinner in the face. She didn't look unhappy. It was said that her mother had taken to bed from the shock of having drunk from the pond where Bob's body lay. Lil was reported to be a good daughter; went about, and kept the place clean.

The District Nurse, Miss Stowe, who worked for several parishes, brought news of her and spoke very highly of her. She thought she was perhaps a bit simple, but quiet and gentle. It seemed a funny description.

As soon as she had gone Mrs. Fielding outraged the feeling of Hester's nurse by insisting that all the clothes Hester had grown out of were to be sent to Lil. She behaved as though she thought Mrs. Fielding was committing a crime.

Christmas is His Day

It was calculated that Lil's child would be born at the end of November, but she said nothing, and let everyone speak as they liked of her. Just at the last when November was gone and they were well into December, she confided the hope to the District Nurse that the child should be born on Christmas Day. Nurse Stowe told Mrs. Fielding that, though the girl had not expressed herself very clearly, she seemed to think no shame could fall on a child if it was born on Christmas Day. Through all her muddled fancy and fixed pregnant appetite, she wished for it, a lucky day for her bastard.

And so it turned out. A boy was born on Christmas Day. He was fine and strong, and weighed over nine pounds.

The day after, during her morning visit, Nurse asked what name she had thought of to call him by, but she did not make any answer.

'Robert's a good enough name for anybody, and Bob for short is handy,' continued Nurse.

'No,' cried Lil, angrily. 'I wants to forget about him and all that. He didn't make me feel proud, he didn't; me up in front of all the nobs. Christmas is his day, so 'e has got somethen to be proud of after all; somethen anybody can know abaht.'

'You can't call him Christmas,' said Nurse, sharply, for she felt it was heartless to talk that way. 'You can't make a guy of him! Why they'd make a grin of him when he comes to go to school.'

Lil turned her face over to hide it

against the pillow, and nothing more was to be got out of her.

That night Mrs. Fielding rang up Nurse Stowe to ask after Lil, and was told about Christmas.

'What a funny idea,' she said. 'Is that a common belief here?'

'Oh, they've got some funny ideas, I can tell you, these people,' was the answer, though Nurse was a local woman herself.

'Tell her,' cried Mrs. Fielding, 'I would like her to call him Noel. Tell her it means Christmas. Tell her it would be nice for her to call him after my husband, the master; he's Noel you know. Do tell her I wish it to be like that, and you must give her my love. Good-night.'

Mrs. Fielding rang off, and felt suddenly much happier than she had been for months. Even the birth of someone else's child made her flush with tenderness, and made her understand that though she said, 'Poor, poor Lil', she really envied her.

She told her husband about her conversation. He stared at her excited, flushed face for a moment before he laughed, and said, 'They'll be saying that I'm the father next. What have you let me in for!'

'Do you mind, darling?' she asked, putting her arm round his neck, and bringing his face close to hers. 'Somehow I like the idea of him being called Noel. You could be his god-father perhaps. I suppose he'll be christened like everybody else.'

'Nonsense!' said Mr. Fielding. 'I don't mind starting a savings-bank

Valentine Dobree

account for him, but I do object going to baptisms.'

Mrs Fielding never went to see Lil; she had gone, with her happy ending, she had fallen clean out of Mrs. Fielding's world; only Mr. Fielding kept the savings-bank account-book, and if he remembered, which was rare, paid in a few shillings now and then. Just once more Mrs. Fielding was to be assaulted by the memory of Lil. It was when Nurse Stowe declared that Lil's Noel looked even at a few hours old the spit and image of his dead father, Bob. Then it seemed that Lil must still be somewhere in the house,

and Mrs. Fielding was seized with anger against those sensible ones who had thought it better that all had happened so, and that the yellow hair should lie and rot. She was far more angry with them than with Lil, who she felt had behaved as though she had no more responsibility than a wild beast. Such simple behaviour, she thought; and it had done for the poor boy more effectively than the goings-on of the most accomplished *femme fatale*.

But Lil found work with the new people who had taken Mrs. Defosse's place. 'Wet or fine,' she never missed a day; and they were glad to find such a sturdy, reliable girl at hand to help them on the farm.

A Salford Schooling

by Walter Greenwood

MY Salford school days were brief because of economic and domestic circumstances which need to be mentioned.

Maternal ambition was responsible for my enrolment at the Langworthy Road Council School where a 'better class' of boy was reputed to attend. In the ordinary course of events I would have been pitchforked into the handiest council school. But my mother was a remarkable woman

She was her father's daughter, and he was a grammar-school boy, a man of iron will, a strict disciplinarian and a Socialist in the movement's earliest days. He had a large family and, because of his views and independent nature, he was an unpopular man. Consequently he suffered. So that my mother, the eldest of the large family, was forced into the mill at a very early age. She read Shakespeare by the loom-side: she walked from Pendleton to Manchester, three miles, and back again, twice and thrice weekly, and after a long day at the mill, to spend her coppers at the opera. Contrary to her father's strong advice she married the interesting and irresponsible man who was my father.

He was a Card, a hairdresser by

profession and an operatic singer by inclination. Despite the fact that he never had a singing lesson in his life, I have yet to hear, speaking comparatively, a richer bass; and I have heard the best. He carried his clothes magnificently but he could not carry his liquor. Spasmodically he indulged heavily and I have vivid recollections of witnessing his signature to The Pledge to abstain from alcohol. Indeed, I think I still have some of the Temperance Society's cards testifying to his vow. Much can be forgiven him, for his, like mine, was a brutalized childhood.

Thinking to reform him, my mother persuaded him to move from the slum shop in which I was born to a shop in a better neighbourhood. Across the way was the School, then ten years old. I was five.

Frequently my father's excesses produced the inevitable financial crises. I distinctly remember coming home from school on the first day to find a strange man sitting at the beautiful carved walnut table which was my mother's pride. The man was drinking tea from the best china. And he was eating Seed Cake. I was very interested in the latter. I can see the glass cake-stand, the lace doily and the cake.

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The man looked at me, I at him, but he did not offer me a piece. He was the bailiff.

Our removal from this shop to another, back in the slums again, was effected with the aid of a bassinette. The streets were wet that night. I still see the silhouettes of my parents trudging in the darkness, not speaking.

My father again signed The Pledge.

At this period I was a scholar in the Infants' Department. This section comprised a large hall with class-rooms either side. There was a Maypole in the centre of the hall round which we danced. But the hall's most important item of furnishing was a glass-fronted cabinet wherein was set a desert scene: miniature palm trees, sands, lions, tigers and camels whose heads, on springs, nodded solemnly if the cabinet was surreptitiously pushed.

We practised handwriting on trays of sand. Our punishment for wrongdoing was solitary confinement.

I can remember being punished in this manner. With it I associate a cellar, though I will not be sure. I remember, with certainty, being banished from the Infants' Department to this solitary confinement and being forgotten by the teacher. Noon came and the other children were freed. The staff departed to their homes until two o'clock. I remained in my exile, alone, wondering, whimpering. After an hour and a half the children began to dribble back. At two o'clock schooling was renewed.

My mother appeared, distraught. Where was I? The teacher remembered.

I was found. Profuse apologies in front of the large audience of interested children. Later in the afternoon I was grudgingly permitted to return to the school.

Meanwhile my father had practised his trade on my hair. It was brushed and parted beautifully. And all the little girls offered to make room for me on their desks after the headmistress had paraded me as an example of neatness. This episode with another, when my ear stopped a snowball as I watched a snowfight between the Big Boys, is all that remains of the Infants' Department. In the whole of my school career I never won a prize or an attendance certificate. I simply was not interested. Probably the fault was the teachers'; likely enough, much of it was mine. To me, the Old School was a place to be avoided, a sort of punishment for being young.

Every July, before the summer holidays, the whole of the school shuddered at the prospect of 'th' exam'; or, as most of us called it, 'the eggs, ham and bacon'. New pen-nibs were distributed, new blotting-paper, spotless foolscap sheets. And the hot July afternoons heard nothing but the scratchings of pens or heads. To pass the examination meant promotion to a higher 'standard'. Classes were named from Standard I to Standard VII. There were no Forms.

I question very much whether Nature could have produced a more provocative set of boys than those who grew up with me. It was not we who were driven mad by such subjects as

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mental arithmetic, but the teachers. One of them, a small, knock-kneed man who we nicknamed 'Bandy', used to collapse impotently across his desk at the answers received to such problems of a man and a half who ate a cake and a half in a day and a half. He would cover his eyes with his hands and moan 'Donkeys', then bawl, glaring, 'Thick-headed, good-for-nothing louts', and cover his eyes again. Then, while we were chuckling at his anger we, unaware that he was peeping at us through his fingers, would suddenly find ourselves named. He was vicious in punishing. We were called out in front of the class, made to extend out palms while he lashed at them savagely with a thin cane.

Sometimes our teachers had cause to leave the room. Without exception each teacher of my knowledge set the class on its honour not to misbehave itself during his absence. He would depart and shut the door after him. A surge of restlessness would hiss round the room; fugitive strains from a mouth organ, thrummings of a jew's harp; the squashy smack of an ink-sodden piece of blotting paper as it hit Claude ——— (who used to scream with fear when thunder was in the air) on the neck; the laughter of Billy ——— as he put his catapult away. Then somebody would dare Bob to drain the inkwell, and, to the huge delight of all, Bob would raise the inkwell, pour the ink down his throat then put out his black tongue to show that there was no trickery. Somebody would punch somebody else in the back or kick somebody's shin with the cool

request to 'Pass it on'. So that while 'it' was going the rounds chaos ensued. And when pandemonium was at its height the door would open, and the teacher, sneering, would enter to deliver a weighty oration on his contempt for our honour.

The teachers' disgust for us was only equalled by our disgust for them, and for the School. There was nothing at all of the Harrow-and-Eton Alma Mater affection. The handbell knelled us to imprisonment at 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. We were released at noon and 4.30 p.m.

Not infrequently revolt against the insufferable tedium found expression in playing truant, or 'wag' as we called it. There were a number of boys always willing to set authority at defiance. Tom, Billy, Harry, Bob and myself. Tom was an ornithologist, Billy a born fighter, Harry the swimmer and Bob the daring.

Of all our adventurings one lovely remembrance lingers still. We had 'wagged it' one sunny June morning. We had spent an hour chasing and riding a flock of sheep in a field. A policeman chased us away, and, presently, we found ourselves in Bluebell Woods, where now is a council estate. Here used to be a farm and rich meadow land. The other boys disappeared, nesting in the hedges, doubtless. I was left alone in the sunlight. Warm winds breathed in my face. I could see the heat haze shimmering in the meadow, the drunken flight of butterflies; birds warbled unseen and the drowsy hum of the bees urged me to lie down. I lay drinking it all in

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and stroking the grasses because they all conspired to make me happy.

Then all was shattered. A crackling in the hedge, the bursting out of my mates with Daddy Thompson's, the farmer's, one-eyed dog at their heel. As we went home I was sickened at the prospect of the School on the morrow and the grey streets to which I had to return. I was always afraid of punishment as a child, particularly of the deferred variety. How many strokes of the cane we got for that escapade I do not know. I know that I sometimes kept a secret and solitary tryst with the meadow. But I don't remember ever again catching it in such a gracious mood: either rain was falling or the sky overcast or the season changed.

Change, change, a melancholy word.

Coming from school one day I found great crowds choking the streets about the shop in which we lived. The shop door was shut. On my appearance the people stopped talking to look at me. Embarrassed, I rattled the latch. An aunt opened the door but wouldn't let me in. 'Go and play,' she said. Then one of the street boys who belonged to the same 'gang' as myself pushed forward and informed me, eagerly: 'Your pa's dead.'

I don't know that the news had much effect on me except to make me feel rather important. Sympathetic women in shawls who stood in the street weeping in testimony of my father's immense popularity, gave me halfpennies. I too became immensely popular with the urchin crowd.

My mother, my sister and myself were left entirely without provision. My mother secured work as a waitress: we removed from the shop to a poky hole of a place and settled down once again. The economics of this period should be of interest. I was nine years old when my father died, my sister four years my junior. My mother earned twelve shillings a week plus lunch and tea. We were relieved to the extent of eight shillings a week by the Board of Guardians. This amount was reduced to half a crown when, later, I obtained spare-time work. So the present Means Test is not an innovation.

Duty kept my mother from home until eight or nine at night. During the day my sister and I were left to fend for ourselves. There was a pastry-cook's at the corner of the street where we ran up a weekly bill. During summertime, when the narrow streets were suffocating, it was our habit to dine *al fresco*. With cups of tea and such sweet cake as we could cajole from the shopkeeper, Betty and I would sit on the w.c. roof, munch, sip, converse with friends in the street, and sometimes extend invitations to them to join us by clambering up the back-yard wall.

In winter it was different. We tried to out-dawdle each other on the way home from school. To be first home meant having to light the fire. Winter was to be dreaded. After morning school the fire would just be warming the room when the clock would warn us of school once again.

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Our income, need I say, was grossly inadequate. My mother had to find extra work. In celebrating something or other there can always be an excuse found for boozing and gluttony. Consequently, such affairs as civic and Masonic banquets which began late and were continued into the small hours afforded more work for my mother. Food, too, sometimes. I was an eater of broken meats at an early age: of necessity, not choice.

It was the habit of us two children to retire to bed and for me to tie a string round my ankle and to dangle the string's other end through the bedroom window. At two or three a.m. I would be wakened by tugs at the string, stumble down stairs half asleep to unbolt the door. Work for her and school for us next day.

Then began another aspect of education quite neglected by the School. My mother, as I have said, was passionately devoted to opera. She came home one evening excited with news that the Beecham Opera Company had made their headquarters in the building where her café was. Instantly she became popular with the artistes and was the flattered recipient of many complimentary tickets. By the time I was twelve there was scarcely an operatic air which I couldn't name. From that I graduated to the Free Trade Hall and the Hallé concerts.

War.

Banquets were abandoned from motives of patriotism. The extra shillings ceased. I found a spare-time job with a milk-roundsman of an early

morning; in the evenings I delivered newspapers for a man with a barber's shop who had served his time under my father. I was given this job out of sympathy, and the man's affection for me proved to be so great that, after I had delivered the newspapers, he used to keep me lathering his customers and sweeping his shop until closing-time – without pay.

One day some military men created great excitement by appearing at the 'Langy Road' school. Some days later us older boys were excused classes to assist in moving articles of a portable nature to another council school not far away. The School was to be a military hospital.

School hours were changed surprisingly. Factory idiom was introduced to the time-table. There were to be two 'shifts'. The original scholars of the other school were to attend from 8.30 a.m. till 10.30 and from 1 p.m. till 3 p.m. The hours appointed for us of 'Langy Road' were 10.30 a.m. until 1 p.m.; 3 p.m. until 5 p.m. Quite a number of the boys of the seventh standard then romping in the school-yard were to die in the Dardanelles.

The two schools despised each other. We were regarded by the others as interlopers. Our hostility and contempt for them was unconcealed. In those days it was customary for the school's best fighter to carry the title 'cock o' the school'. He held the name while he was prepared to defend, successfully, his title against all comers. Billy was our man. And since his family, like mine, was fatherless and

Walter Greenwood

also in poor circumstances, a vague affinity existed between us. Nobody tried to bully me while Billy was within call. No sooner were we, as a school, installed in our new home than challenges were exchanged

The 'cock' of the other school, a hefty, rough-looking boy arranged to meet our man after five o'clock. Both schools, yelling, attended the assigned place. All I remember was being crushed and pushed, swaying with the crowd and yelling until I was hoarse. Finally the crowd broke, Billy, fists clenched, flushed, panting, an eye half-shut, flashed by, carried shoulder-high. The vanquished lay alone, blubbering in the mud.

At this period breadwinners were being recruited by the score. Our income at home was shrunk to an irreducible minimum. Other families were in a similar predicament. A boom began in the pawnbroking business. Running home from school one day I saw a notice in a pawnshop window: 'BOY WANTED'. I got the job. The hours were 6.30 a.m. of a Monday morning until school-time at 10.30, then 6 p.m. until closing time; 8 p.m. weekdays, 9 Saturdays. Other than Monday the shop opened at 8 a.m. Wages 3s. 6d. a week. A windfall!

School became a sort of inconvenient necessity, an interruption in the earning of a livelihood. Perhaps this explains why I have so little to say about it. All was mean and shabby and without colour. Sooty school, smoky streets, the trudge homewards to the cold house and empty grate. A swig

of tea, a bite of such food as was in the house, then to the pawnbroker's until closing time. While, irrelevant as it may seem, millions of pounds daily were spent in the destruction of human life.

Subconsciously I was being educated, at least, preparing to be educated. It was not until years later that the study of Marxian economics satisfactorily explained the causes of my predicament.

Frequently our teacher digressed, nowadays. Geography centred around the Western Front. We were entertained with stories of our soldiers' and allies' bravery. Tales of enemy atrocities were substantiated by the appearance of Belgian families who came to live in the district.

Opportunities to 'wag it' from school increased. One could excuse one's absence by lies of being detained in food queues.

But birthdays were shattering old associations. Billy, the 'cock o' the school', being fatherless, applied for his release on his thirteenth birthday. He had work promised in an engineering shop. One by one the old faces disappeared. My own birthday was fast approaching. I looked forward to it with much excitement. I wanted the freedom of a full-time job; my evenings free and lots of money in my pocket.

Seventeen years ago, a few days after my thirteenth birthday, the headmaster gave me a testimonial and shook hands with me. I ran out into the schoolyard yelling with triumph. My schooldays were over and I was free to find a full-time job. I was envied.

Terminus

by Arthur Calder-Marshall

SHE sat down on the horse-shoe bench, pinchfaced and demure. Her feet swung clear of the ground. She tucked her hair behind her ears, drawing the backs of her fingers through it. The grey-haired man brought over a tankard of stout and a whisky and set them on the table before her.

He smiled. She looked at herself in the mirror of her bag and pursed her lips.

The grey-haired man went back to the bar and fetched a midget bottle of soda.

'Say when,' he said.

She patted the air, meaning 'when'.

He bent forward, hands on knees, peering at her through his spectacles; and head cocked slightly left, he said, 'Won't you have something to eat?'

'No, thanks.'

'A ham sandwich?'

'No, thank you.'

'Have a bun, then; a chelsea bun?'

She nodded her head, no.

'They've got very nice sausages.'

'No, thank you.'

'Well,' he said, standing up straight, 'I'm going to have a sandwich. Are you sure you wouldn't like something?'

She smiled and nodded her head from side to side.

The man went back to the bar and got his sandwich. Then brought it and sat down beside her. He took a bite of it and said, 'You ought to have some of this; you really ought. It's got mustard in it. Let me give you half.'

'I don't want it,' she said, and sipped her whisky.

'You'll be there in two hours time. Charley'll be waiting for you, at the station.'

'I know he will,' she said. 'I know Charley. You always seem to forget I know him.'

'Charley's nice. He's a bit dull, but he's straight.' The grey-haired man drummed a tune on his knee with the fingers of his right hand. 'He's not clever, but he'll make a good husband and a fine father. Have a sardine on toast?'

'No, thanks.' She took a cigarette from a case in her bag and, while he fumbled for matches, lit it from a mother-of-pearl lighter.

'That's a good lighter I gave you,' he said. 'It's lasted well. A damn nice lighter, that is.' He took it from her and felt it in his fingers.

'You can have it back, if you want,' she said. 'I know Charlie, he's straight.'

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He's a gentleman His mother must have been a fine woman.'

'Haven't I told you? She was the finest woman I ever knew,' he said. 'I wasn't fit to unlatch her shoes.'

She picked tobacco shreds from her lip with the nail of her little finger; then said, 'I can't think why she married you.'

'Nor can I.' He raised the tankard and half-drained it. Then said, 'You're not sore, are you? You don't bear malice. I mean, Charley's not half bad when you know him.'

'He's the finest man I know,' she said. 'I'm proud of Charley. With that ten pounds a week he'll get the Radio shop going. He'll be a changed man.'

'I can't bear to think of you not having anything to eat,' he said. 'Why not try a tomato sandwich. The girl 'ld make it, if I asked her. She's a friend of mine.'

'No, thanks; I don't want it.' She finished her whisky.

'I really believe you bear malice,' he said.

'I'll have another whisky.'

He got up and went to the bar. She leant forward, covering her face with her hands.

Looking from the bar, he saw her. 'Make it a small one,' he said. 'She's had about enough.'

As he came back, she looked at her watch. 'There's plenty of time,' he said. 'Mustn't miss the train, though.'

She poured out the rest of the midget soda. As she sat back, hands crossed on her lap, she grew rigid and shivered from the shoulders downwards

'You'd have time for a macaroon, if you fancied one,' he said, drumming on the table. His fingernails were too long.

'I don't.'

'You won't tell him about us, will you? It wouldn't do any good. It'd only make him unhappy. And he won't think it strange. He's always been asking for that money.'

'D'you think I'd tell him about me? What sort of fool d'you think I am?'

'I knew you wouldn't tell him. Course I knew. He won't suspect anything, see. As long as you don't bear malice.'

'We best be going,' she said, looking at the clock.

'I'll see you off,' he said. 'I can get a platform ticket. It'll be no trouble.'

They finished their drinks and stood up. She had a large suitcase and a patent leather dressing case. He took the large case and they walked on to the platform.

The train stood ready.

'There're not many people,' he said, 'not at this time of night. I'll find you a corner seat, easy.'

He got one in a third class smoker, went in and stowed her cases on the rack.

She stood on the platform, waiting to get in. He stepped out and took her in his arms. 'Kiss me before you go,' he said.

She stood stiff as a pole. He kissed her on both cheeks. 'Kiss your future father-in-law,' he said laughing.

She stepped past him and into the

Terminus

age. Sat down in the corner seat
ie window, drawn up all small
He put his head in and said,
rley'll be waiting for you at the
on with the van.'

She didn't seem to hear.

The guard blew his whistle and
ed his flag The engine whistled
began to snort. The train got
er way.

He fumbled in his overcoat pocket
get something out, running along-

side the carriage meanwhile. The train
gathered speed. He pulled the parcel
from his pocket and threw it in at the
window.

She didn't look at him nor wave
good-bye.

Through his cupped hands, he
shouted at the receding door, 'In case
you're hungry on the way.'

She looked down dully at the paper
bag, which lay on her lap. Her fingers
closed round the apples contained.

Mid-Autumn

by Alfred Morang

THEY never stop here on their way to the mill. They never look at me.' Her voice was soft, and the wind blew away the words. Its low moaning filled the room. Far down the road, a team moved, trailing its long blue shadow. A man sat on the team, his hands holding the reins. His head nodded with the movement. No one saw the team. No one cared who the man was. Few teams come up the Bay-side Road at ten in the morning. All the mill men go to work at half past seven, and after that the road is deserted.

'I sit here and think. The trees are red with Fall. There is a bluish haze over the river. The wind sighs.' Her face was lined, and the words became a thin complaint, too weak to be heard in the farther corner of the room.

Up on Main Street, some men stood in front of the post office, their faces like the street itself, dull and commonplace. They talked of the mill and lumber, the town's slow dying, and no one seeming to care what happened.

Yellow dust arose from the wheels, but the man did not see it. His head nodded with the motion. Farmhouses became jewel bright in the October sunlight. Trees were red-yellow fingers pointing straight upward.

On the river, a small white boat crept inshore. Hank Adams sat in the bow, his eyes seeing the buildings on shore. Hank liked to come inshore, slowly, to see people like small dolls walking down the shore road. From out there on the river he could not tell who they were. It was like getting away from the town itself, seeing new things. Hank made believe that he was coming into a strange port. When the boat grounded, he leaped out and stood straightly, looking at the houses. Then Hank laughed. The dream was over. Now he would go home and see his wife. She would be grim-faced, churchy, hating people and things with good God-fearing hate words on her bloodless lips.

The team veered from one side of the road to the other. The horse nosed toward some tall grass beside the road. Overhead, the sun went under a cloud. A chill shadow crept over the man. It was like a promise of coming winter. Warm wind became cold in the shadow.

'Strangers come up the road. They go into the town, and then they are lost. They never come again,' said Herb Miller. He spat on the ground, and the saliva sank into the sun-dry earth. Herb lived in a shack beside the river.

Mid-Autumn

Things moved in summer-still haze. Herb never went uptown. People laughed when they saw him. There was talk about Herb. No one knew where he came from. The life in the town was too slow to care.

Her hands folded and opened like flowers. The shadow fell across her face, and stained the year-tired flesh a deep purple. Then she saw the team. It had stopped in front of the house. The man climbed down. For a moment he stood there looking at her house; then he walked up the path, his face yellow-orange with the sunlight. The cloud had drifted by. Now things were October bright. The faint haze had drifted out beyond the river's mouth, and become lost in the bay water's sheen.

She heard his knocking on the door, and when the man said, 'I'm going to live in this town,' he smiled. He talked on. 'You're Miss Burns, aren't you? People down at Machias told me about you.' He pulled a paper from his pocket. There were lines of print on the paper, telling about the time she went to the county convention and talked about the moral sins of the town. 'I'm a minister,' he said, 'I travel from town to town. I save the souls of people.' He looked at the sky; then his hand pointed into the blueness. 'God is there,' he said, 'God seeing the weaknesses of men. I'm His mouth-piece. Sometimes I can feel the words coming. They leap out. They are His words.' The man sat down on the doorstep. He crossed his legs, and read a poem from a church paper aloud.

Hank Adams passed up the road. This was not a new place. Miss Burns sat on her doorstep talking with a stranger. The houses were the same. The windows looked out upon the same people. Hank looked at the stranger. He heard a voice, deep and wheezy, talking about God, about the sins of men.

Miss Burns leaned over the man. Her eyes shone. Here was a preacher coming. He would help people. She wanted to, with him.

Out on the road, the horse nodded in the October sunshine. The team looked old and run-down. There was no paint on the buggy. Where the stuffing came through the seat, it looked like a man with tufts of hair all over a face of sun-brown skin.

All day, the man walked the main street. He called on the ministers in town, talking about his mission, and how he was going to save the sinners there. They looked at him. This October and its stillness was like so many more that had come up the river. No one ever did much in the town. There were sexings, and later children born. Women talked, and then forgot, in another scandal. But it was all a part of the place. On Sundays, the churches were not half full. Hymns were faintly sung.

'Save them,' the man said. 'There's a good woman where I stopped when I first came into town. She will help. Her face is that of a good woman.' The ministers smiled. Every one knew Miss Burns. Her tongue wagged like the wind blowing through summer leaves. That sound was part of the place.

Alfred Morang

Men in front of the post office talked about the stranger. They said it was a good thing. Then their eyes fell, and saw the street yellow with mid-fall sunlight. Their eyes half closed. The talk drifted to other things: what the power company would do about a new dam far up the river; what a woman on State Street said when her husband was found with the Collins girl down on the River Road

The days went past, Fall-rich with colour. Leaves fell from the trees, and made the ground thick with brown-red, and all the time the stranger walked the streets, his mouth full of all that he would do. A few women asked him into their houses. The horse and team stayed in the livery stable. Mr. Edwards repainted the buggy. He said a preacher ought to have a bright new team to spread the gospel of God in. People would say it paid, when they saw that new paint shining in the sunlight.

One day the stranger stood in the post office and talked to the men. His eyes were bright. They listened and nodded. Anything helps to break up the mid-Fall days. Words shake them awake a little. Winter would blot out all the richness of October. There would be a whiteness covering Main Street. Girls would stay indoors. No more sexing couples on the River Road until new grass came in the Spring.

'Save them . . . sinners . . .' His words were like thorns. They cut into the mind flesh, and stung it into wakefulness. 'Let the strong rise up and

smite the low.' His voice was filled with long hours of riding, and his dreams. The horse had heard all those words. The yellow road dust had settled over them. Now they leaped into new life. Then men smiled. It's a good thing to have a man come into town and talk like that. It makes people think, and in a little town like Ellsmont people are apt to be half asleep in October.

Miss Burns walked from house to house. There were plans for a meeting in the town hall. Posters to do. Get all the school children to draw them. Make the letters red, so dim Fall-heavy eyes could see them. Have a supper before. On full bellies, people will sit. They are too food-full to want action. Then all words are good.

Her lips became filled with blood. Her eyes shone with new life. Here was something to do. No more sitting in her front room, seeing the road empty, no one ever stopping at her house. Even Hank Adams talked. He no longer went out on the river. There was enough on the shore to see and hear.

The posters came into windows, like flowers that open on a last sun promise before winter. People looked at them and said, 'It's a good thing.' Then their eyes half closed. A Fall-mist came into them. The main street was yellow in the sunshine.

On the night before the revival meeting, the stranger walked beside the river, his eyes full of the darkness. He was going to talk, let the words drip

Mid-Autumn

over the heads of people. Far out on the wetness, a light bobbed up and down. It was a fisherman's boat put in for the night. Maybe the fisherman was up-town drinking in the back room of the hotel. People said there were things going on there. The stranger doubled his fist. The word of God would change all that.

Herb Miller saw the river grow dark that night. He saw the light bobbing up and down. It was like an eye seeing him. Then Herb laughed. Let people in the town talk. He did not care, living in his shack, seeing the Fall haze cover people and houses, blending them all into a pattern. Herb sat down on his doorstep. Then he saw the stranger. Herb called. 'Come sit down and watch the light,' he said, 'it looks like an eye.' One hand pointed. His fingers became lost in the thick darkness.

When the stranger asked Herb about going to the revival meeting, Herb laughed. 'I live here,' he said. 'No one cares. They don't know where I came from. Maybe I have forgotten; maybe I haven't.' He looked at the stranger. Then Herb went into the house and brought out a jug of whisky. He poured some into a white cup and passed it to the stranger. 'It will warm you up', Herb said. 'The Fall nights are chill.'

The horse had seen the stranger drunk, heard the words fall, keener than small knife blades. Whisky loosened the stranger's tongue. It became smooth as oil then. Once he had preached in a church. The people had

kicked him out. His lips had been covered with words, like oil, smooth. When he was sober, the words were rough. He believed all that he said. But when whisky loosened his mind, a softness came. The sinners were a part of nature, their sins like the flowers. Only the sky saw, and it never blamed what went on under its warmth or chill.

'I like it,' the stranger said. 'It does warm me.' Then he talked. Herb opened his ears. The words fell about him. Out on the river, the light bobbed up and down. The white cup was filled again and again, and each time the stranger talked more. Herb smiled, and lay back on his doorstep. Lights began to go out in the houses. People were going to bed. The haze crept up the river.

Then Herb said, 'I'll be going in now. It's too cold out here.' The stranger got up and stretched his arms above his head. There was a lightness in him. He felt that he could fly over the ground and not touch the dead Fall leaves. Herb looked out over the river. The light faded, and then went out. 'Time for everyone to go to bed,' Herb said.

The stranger heard the door of Herb's shack close. For a moment he stood there. Then his lips opened, but no words came. He thought about his buggy covered with new paint, and how farmers along the roads would look when he drove past them. There are so many buggies all drab with weather on the roads.

Alfred Morang

Miss Burns was going to bed when the stranger pounded on her door. The sound echoed through her house. Miss Burns was a little afraid. No one ever knocks in the night time in Ellsmont. When she opened the door, the stranger came in. His face was red, and his words disjointed. He was talking about the people who sexed on the River Road. He was going to preach a sermon on the blending: flowers growing out of the Spring warm earth; people planting their seed; children dancing under a green night sky. Miss Burns listened; then she pushed him out into the darkness, and bolted her door. She heard him stagger up the shore road, his feet beating an uneven rhythm on the ground.

When the stranger came to the livery tables, he shook the night man awake, and together they harnessed the horse. With a piece of old rag, the stranger polished the buggy until it shone in lantern light like new. No one saw the buggy drive down the main street and turn into the Falls Road. People go to bed early in Ellsmont. Their dreams are full of the coming winter, when all things will be covered with whiteness, and wait for the first grass of Spring.

People talked the next day. The posters came down, and there were blank spaces in all of the windows where they had been. It would be too much bother to fill up those empty spaces. Maybe some show would come to town and fill them up again.

By the end of the week, people had forgotten the stranger. Most of the

trees were bare now, and men were busy banking the houses with brush. It filled the air with a sweet smell. Passing women talked about suppers in the church vestry, and how the power company would start work on the new dam way up country in the early part of next summer.

'The door is locked. No one will come here. The men have gone to work in the mill, and the road will be empty. Even the dust won't rise in the wind. Soon snow will cover it.' Miss Burns' voice drifted away. Her eyes looked down the road. There were no teams coming, only the far distance was thick with a late Fall mist, and the wind came in fitful puffs up the river.

Then Miss Burns went to the front door, and braced a chair against it. She prodded the chair with one foot, and said, 'Now no one can get in if they break the lock.' Her lips closed. They were bloodless and white, and her eyes were as if a thin Fall mist had been drawn over them, shutting out the light of an October sun.

Down by the river, Herb Miller and Hank Adams stood. 'I'll be rowing out now,' Hank said. 'It's a lot of fun coming inshore. People you know look like strangers.'

Herb smiled. 'I'll go in now,' he said. 'I won't come out until the new grass comes. I don't like winter.' Then he shivered and closed the door of his shack, shutting out the wind, which had increased, tossing the river into tiny waves that broke on the shore, covering the small rocks with a wet sheen, reflecting the Fall-grey sky.

The Author and the Printer

by E. E. Kellett

I HAVE often thought that, in their pride of authorship, authors tend to be too ungrateful for the services done to us by the typists, the printers, and the other mechanics who aid in the making of books. We imagine authorship, or as we fondly call it, 'creation', to be something ethereal and sublime, forgetting that even the ethereal and sublime require solidity to rest upon. As Trafalgar would have been impossible without the humble toil of hundreds of ship-builders and sailmakers, to say nothing of the quiet provision of naval bases, so with arts more noble than that of war. The most supramundane of painters or musicians needs his brush-maker or his organ-builder. So with the writer: he may compose his essays or his poems; but he must not ignore the plain workmen who labour to prepare his works for the world. To forget them is to be like an architect who should neglect the masons, the carpenters, the quarrymen, and the clerks of the works, without whose co-operation his design would remain a mere sketch upon paper.

We can gain some idea of the worth of this co-operation by considering what has come down to us from the days when writers had largely to do without

it. Take a glance at some ancient manuscript – say the great uncial which has recently been purchased for this country. You will find no division of words, no punctuation, few paragraphic separations, no satisfactory demarcation even of sentences, no distinction between capitals and small letters, no marks of quotation or interrogation. As a result you have to puzzle out, slowly and with difficulty, what in a modern copy you can read with ease. A 'cursive' manuscript is not much better, for the abbreviations, and the characters generally, are a plague to eye and brain. Or take an old inscription, such as the famous Moabite Stone, and when you have deciphered it compare it with the elaborate system devised by the 'Massoretes' for the elucidation of the Hebrew Bible: the most thorough and far-reaching ever adopted in any language, one in which there are not only marks of separation more or less similar to our commas and semicolons, but also connecting marks, indicating phrases which are to be uttered in a breath. A lector in a synagogue, with these signs to guide him, is without excuse if he reads the sacred verses in a manner not understood by the people; where-

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as the inscription has to be laboriously spelt out, even by competent scholars, and cannot be understood until the punctuation has been, at least, mentally supplied. I have heard that Assyrian scholars prefer to transliterate the cuneiform, and add the punctuation, in order to master its full sense. The case is not otherwise with later and much simpler documents. The interpretation of many Latin and Greek passages is often uncertain because the authors and their copyists have provided no authoritative dashes and brackets. In Horace's line,

Optat ephippia bos piger optat
arare caballus,

does *piger* go with *bos* or with *caballus*? We can guess, but we cannot be sure. Nay, it is not long since a scholar made sense of a passage in this same Horace, which had baffled whole hosts of students, by a simple change of punctuation. There is a well-known passage in Juvenal (XIII, 16), the entire meaning of which is altered if we change a full stop to a note of interrogation. If we leave the full-stop, it fixes the date of Juvenal's birth; if we insert a question mark, it does something far less important – it merely tells us the age of Calvinus, the man to whom he addresses the satire. Perhaps the most famous lines in Virgil are those which contain the obituary of the young heir of Augustus, lines which when recited by the poet drew tears from the bereaved mother:

Heu miserande puer, si qua fata
aspera rumpas,
Tu Marcellus eris.

Read them with a dash after *rumpas*, and a sad note of exclamation after *eris*, and, as a commentator suggests, you obtain the more pathetic 'Ah, unhappy boy, if but you could break the bonds of fate – But alas, you are to be Marcellus, doomed to die young'.

When the father of the demoniac came to Jesus, and said, 'If thou canst do anything, have compassion and help us', what a depth of meaning is revealed by the Revisers' mere insertion of a note of exclamation 'If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth' The words are a half-indignant repetition of the father's hesitating phrase 'Of course I can, if you but trust.' Again, in the Book of Job there are probably a dozen places where the exasperated sufferer is sarcastically quoting words of his 'comforters', and turning them to his own use. We miss the point because the poet had not the means of making this clear by using a few quotation-marks; and this magnificent poem is therefore not appreciated as it deserves to be.

Now, though the vanity of authors tends to forget the fact, beauty in a writer's style is but the obverse of intelligent pleasure in the reader. There is no such thing as a book without someone to peruse it; as Goethe admitted that his public wrote half his works for him, and as Demosthenes declared that the audience provided half his eloquence. If we find no attraction in the reading, the style is *so far* bad. And the attractiveness depends largely on the ease with which we can divine the author's intention. If we

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have to disengage it with labour, as a rule it ceases to charm: we eat the bread with sorrow, and sometimes even curse the ground. But *who* is it that provides this ease? It is safe to say, less the author than the printer. Clear type, correct punctuation, capital letters, and other devices which we too often despise as mechanical – these, again and again, earn for an author the repute of a good style: I might venture to say that even the binder sometimes does his share in the unselfish work.¹ The mere printing of verse in isolated lines has gained for certain writers the poetical renown which they had hitherto failed to achieve. How many people perceived the lyrical splendour of the Song of Songs when it was printed as prose? and how many more will see the genius of Isaiah if ever a popular translation shall print him, as he ought to be printed, in couplets or in stanzas of four lines?

Among these ‘mechanical aids’ the bracket, or, what is often in effect the same thing, the footnote, is not the least useful and effective. We can here also easily test its utility by noting how sadly its absence in ancient writings injures the style, or how, conversely, the author, for fear of injuring his style, at times appears to omit qualifications and exceptions which his modern counterpart tucks neatly away at the foot of the page. To-day the notes are there, but the reader, keeping them apart in his mind from the main text, feels no hindrance

to his enjoyment of the narrative. He reads them, as it were, in a mental parenthesis, in cerebral small print; and returns without effort to the point at which he deserted the larger type. Perhaps the best example, on the negative side, is the History of Herodotus, which is full of digressions and ‘goings-back’. Many of these, I think, Herodotus would have thrown into footnotes had such conveniences existed in his time. This is a Greek instance: but another, easily accessible to all whether Greek scholars or not, may be found in a book better known even than Herodotus. In the Authorized Version of Joshua, the ordinary reader is, or ought to be, sadly embarrassed by the fact that the sixth chapter, which really runs straight on after the fifth, is set apart, with headline and capital letters. The Revised Version, by putting the two chapters in close connection, and by the simple employment of a pair of brackets, makes all clear. ‘The captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Put off thy shoes from off thy feet. And Joshua did so. (Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the Children of Israel.) And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given Jericho into thy hand.’ We perceive that we are dealing with a continuous conversation, and not, as might appear from the previous arrangement, with two independent talks; while the bracketed verse contains a piece of incidental information of considerable importance. ‘Remember, Jericho is carefully defending herself all the while.’ Nor is

¹ Not to mention the services of the ‘reader’, which are often invaluable.

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this by any means – as indeed we have seen already – the only case in which, by mere typography, the Revisers have made obscurity lucid. As in this example, they have often gained their end by *removing* the typographical excesses of their forerunners: there can be no doubt that the separation of the Biblical text into isolated verses, which the translators of 1611 adopted from older authorities, has been not only a serious hindrance to understanding but a fruitful source of superstition. By doing away with this, the Revisers have given a great impulse to the right reading of the Bible.

I wish indeed that it had been possible for them to have gone further. Who, for instance, but would like to know, in the Gospel of John, where the words of Christ end and the comment of the Evangelist begins? But neither the translators with all their scholarship, nor anyone else, can tell. Had the author lived in the days of inverted commas, he might have used them and resolved our doubts: but he had not these helps, and the translators, rightly enough, have not dared to go beyond their text. For an inverted comma is often a mighty engine of interpretation or error: to add it is to assume a Pontifical authority which the Revisers did not wish to claim. There is a long digression in the sixth Book of Thucydides at which his commentators have sadly boggled. He is describing the events of 415 B.C., and has incidentally to mention that expulsion of the Pisistratids, which happened nearly a hundred years before. As to this, he

believes, wrong opinions were held, and he therefore spends no less than six chapters in relating what he regards as the true story. ‘The introduction of this episode,’ says Mr. Marchant, ‘causes great surprise to modern critics’; and it forms certainly a very clumsy interruption to the main narrative. But can there be the least doubt that, if modern devices had then existed, there would have been no clumsiness? There would have been a simple asterisk, referring us to the foot of the page: and, as the episode is long, Thucydides would have merely said, ‘See note at the end of the chapter’. Compare his case with that of Macaulay, who always owned himself inferior to Thucydides, but who, in this respect, by the mere progress of invention, was vastly his superior. Writing of the reform of the coinage in 1695, he has occasion to mention Gresham’s Law, that when good and bad coins contend together, the bad drive out the good; and he remembers that Aristophanes had observed the fact but had failed to see the reason. Does he spoil his story by quoting Aristophanes in his text? He cannot, of course, with his classical sympathies, resist the temptation to refer to him; but he quotes him in a note; the reader is unembarrassed; no ‘critic’ is ‘surprised’; and the main story goes smoothly on in the tranquillity of the upper part of the page.

There are few more interesting books in the world than the old Icelandic Sagas – when you once get well started on them. But it must be confessed that they often repel the read-

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er at first sight; for they usually begin with a somewhat tedious genealogy Njal's Saga, for example, is fully worthy of being compared to the Iliad or the Odyssey; but on the very first page we are confronted with a *stemma* not unlike that which begins the Book of Chronicles. The story would have had much more chance of popularity had this been relegated, as it would have been to-day, to a separate page, and presented as a family-tree. Very wisely, in fact, Dasent in his translation has put all these lists in footnotes. Had he acted similarly with the law-language that encumbers the later chapters, and referred us to an appendix, he would have made the book still more readable. And he would have been perfectly justified; for it is all but certain that the original author would have done something of the kind had the means been available.

I said at the beginning that we are not sufficiently appreciative of the typographical privileges we enjoy. This is true; and we show our ingratitude by not making, in every case, either a full or a right use of them. To-day, for instance, there are authors who deliberately neglect the art of punctuation, and give their readers unnecessary trouble by omitting a comma here or a semicolon there. It would be easy, but it would be tedious, to give scores of examples of this laziness or perversity. I think also, though here I shall probably have many opponents, that there is too great a shyness of italics or other emphasizing devices. Again and again, were the emphatic word specially

marked, the sense of a passage might be more easily caught than it is, and the necessity of a second reading might be obviated. I would go yet further, and say that our store of signs might be advantageously increased. Without desiderating, for all books, a system as complete as that of the Hebrew Scriptures, which I mentioned above, I think – to take one example – the adoption of the Spanish method of indicating a question by a sign *just before* the interrogative clause would be a very serviceable reform. As things are, we have often to wait to the end before we recognize that it is a question at all, whereas the Spanish device gives the reader fair and timely warning. I believe, again, that in the use of the means we already have we might well take a hint from our American friends. Their books – especially their grammars and other school-manuals – are, as a rule, far ahead of ours in the way they avail themselves of changes of type to call attention to points of importance.

There is one device, by no means of recent invention, which it took authors a long time to utilize in a proper manner, and which indeed is not fully understood by all authors even to-day. This is the paragraph, perhaps the most powerful of all the external instruments that go to produce a clear and pleasant style. Who does not know how well a good writer seizes the chances the paragraph gives him? By a little touch, perhaps by a single word, or possibly by merely putting a certain word in a particular

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place, he prepares us, at the end of one paragraph, for what is coming in the next: and in similar delicate fashion the next paragraph recalls its predecessor, and works the desired transition. It may be that the new section continues or strengthens the old; if so, the author leaves the reader in no doubt – a turn of phrase does the business. It may be that a contrast, an exception, or a qualification, is intended: here also the right connecting link is supplied, and we read on easily, hardly noticing the silken bonds in which we have been held.

But this, unlike the paragraph itself, is a comparatively recent discovery. To illustrate the fact by examples would obviously be too difficult: it would mean transcribing whole pages from early and late writers. But let the reader glance at a few chapters of Hooker, Clarendon, Barrow, or Fuller, and he will, I think, agree that in this respect these great writers fall lamentably behind many of the moderns, otherwise far less richly endowed. To them, as a rule, paragraphs were isolated entities, living 'enlaid', as Matthew Arnold said all mortals live, sundered and estranged from one another. Nay, if we study such an excellent work, of much later times, as Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, we shall see that the paragraphs are poorly managed: so much so that, without the alteration of a word, the book might be greatly improved, and our pleasure in reading it considerably increased.

Still more marked would be the improvement – though there are few competent for the task – if by the turns and hints I have described, the due connection of the paragraphs were brought into clearer relief.

There are not many aspects in which English prose style can claim superiority over French: but it seems to me that in this one point some French writers might learn a lesson from us. There are French novelists of repute to whom, it would appear, a paragraph is no more than a sentence. Victor Hugo, for example, as may be gathered from almost any page of *Les Misérables*, uses paragraphs so short that he has no means left for marking a real and important transition. The narrative goes on, not smoothly and evenly, but by a succession of constant jerks: we are eternally pulled up as if every sentence were meant to be a surprise, until finally the jaded mind ceases to function, and no emphasis can move us.

Be this so or not, let not the author, however conscious of genius he may be, forget that without the help of an army of humble assistants he would fail of recognition. Should the piano-maker do his work badly, then even Liszt would hardly please: let the compositor lose his conscience and his pride in his work, and where is the great novelist? Once more we must recognize that we are all members one of another, and that if one member suffer, the whole body will suffer with it.

Loves of the Lions

by Charles Madge

UPON the borders of the desert is a town,
And the dust-columns slowly pass that way
Concealing caravans and military stores
Which have come across the salty wasted sand
Between the sunny villages of the Moors:
It is a sad and dusty place by day,
And small as a rock spider in a hand
Whose jointed fingers might curve over and down.

But at night, when the last tram has gone home
And only one still searchlight searches the sky,
The cooling desert is alert with life,
And mouths draw in breath which were shut all day.
And mouths carnivorous for desert strife
Slow open the large caverns wherein creatures die;
In reeds and bushes run the scurrying prey
And the stars chase along the desert hippodrome.

Where the smooth eyes of a woman all of stone
Unplanted with lashes, into sudden life
Melt quick as ice on meteors often found;
Where the long stabbing cactus roots
Find moisture in the parched and gritty ground;
Where humans lie asleep, large breathing fruits;
Where sleeps the bearded chief and his smooth wife;
Where shadows of the mountain sleep or groan.

Here run small coneys on their grassy tracks,
Pursuit of love that hurries here and there:
And every insect people; the moon in time
Floats, dangerous for an invading tribe.
And as she curves the night, to hilltops climb
The lions and the lionesses, and inscribe
The night with journeys of each faithful pair.
An aeroplane sinks down above the iron stacks.

Smoking Concert

by L. A. Pavey

THE not too large room they hired once a year from The Crown and Feathers was so full that only waiters long practised in their particular kind of juggling could have served the drinks that were called for in endless rotation – or at any rate served them without disaster. And after not more than a quarter of the evening had been spent the atmosphere was so thick that they had also to be possessed of a special sort of sight. It was as though they carried on, with the odds heavily against them, a sort of Dogger Bank engagement through the fog.

They were gathered in self-chosen groups at little tables, these men from a large City office; but already, within half an hour of the opening chorus, they had become a company quite different from the collection of casual individuals that had filed in at the beginning. They were knit now by close ties and sentiments, and they had a solid front to show the world. Each one even felt obscurely that the daily routine in the office must be something different, more significant, than it had hitherto appeared, if these other by no means negligible people were concerned in it. They gradually became slightly proud of themselves. They slung out their legs

a bit farther from under the tables and leaned back, hands in pockets.

Prescott was glad he was with Dicks and Lawley, men whom he liked although he met them seldom. Their business orbits did not often happen to intersect. He also surveyed the rest of the gathering with a growing interest, feeling quite pleased that he was for once on a level with his juniors and that he need not bother about the status of his seniors. He ordered three more pints of beer with crisp incisiveness, firmly putting down Lawley's attempt to take the lead from him. As he drank, first ceremoniously holding out his tankard towards Dicks', then towards Lawley's, it seemed to him very right, and not in the least a small thing, that out of the corner of his eye he could see pots raised or half-raised to happy faces, or people sitting contentedly talking to their fellows. A feeling of warmth towards all these folk, bound to him by the undeniable tie that they lived through the same working day, engaged on the same business, pervaded him. He wished they could see it in his face and bearing – he looked round, and catching the eyes of a couple of colleagues rather better known to him

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than the rest, raised his tankard to them and smiled happily. His lips formed the word 'Cheerio!' and he heard it himself, but it did not carry beyond his own table.

There was a hammering on his left.

'Gentlemen,' roared the chairman, 'silence, please. Mr. Tom Peters will sing "The Sergeant Major", by request.'

Thoroughly at ease, in delightful warmth, he heard the song in snatches, sometimes allowing his attention to wander and sometimes joining in the chorus. He thought of his old Army days and they appeared desirable. As he now saw it, he may have been a slave, but his slavery had been enveloped in a larger freedom. He would have liked to convey this idea in its entirety to Dicks, whom he felt was a man of understanding, after his own kidney. But he realized that, at that time, and in those circumstances, it was impossible. Instead, Dicks said to him emphatically, and laying stress on his own stark individuality in opposing the sentiment of the applauding gathering, 'I say - b—r the sergeant-major!'

This seemed to Prescott at least as true as anything he might have said to Dicks, and he laughed heartily with him. 'I am a man of large tolerance,' he thought to himself, 'and able to appreciate everybody's opinion. Dicks must realize that!'

Being that sort of man, he considered that a place in this world of easy good fellowship, where people drank together and sang to one another, was his by right. The fact that he had not been to such a gathering for many

months presented itself to him somewhat uneasily, but he put it aside. 'Mustn't overdo things,' he told himself sagely. He remembered Office Smoking Concerts of earlier years; before that one or two evenings among bachelor friends; and before that again cafés in France where life had run full to overflowing. . . .

The hammer went again. 'Silence for the Chair.'

'Omnes,' shouted the chairman, 'Number fourteen, "Pack up your troubles", and when we say that, gentlemen, we *mean* "Pack them!" Sing as if there's no office and not a care in the world!'

'That's the stuff,' thought Prescott enthusiastically. He sang until his voice cracked, and he looked sharply at Lawley, to see if he'd noticed. But Lawley was singing himself, intently, in a queer sort of bass.

Directly the song was over and the singers were cheering themselves he leaned across to Lawley and said, 'Sang that a few times, eh? D'you remember Montauban? Well—'

'Yes,' said Lawley with emphasis, then fumbled in his mind for the expression of what seemed to be an acute emotion. But all he could add was, 'Long time ago now.'

Prescott did not like to feel that the time was quite so long. 'Getting on,' he admitted. 'Judicial,' he thought, 'I am, judicial.'

'Oh, it's a hell of a time, really,' said Lawley carelessly, with an air as though he might just as easily or appropriately have said something else.

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Prescott was a trifle startled, but seeing at once that Prescott really didn't give a damn he grinned easily. 'Finely tolerant,' he told himself, 'that's what I am. Finely tolerant.'

'Miss Vivie Bennett,' announced the chairman

Miss Bennett was a bold baggage, attired in a nurse's uniform that was tremendously exaggerated, except as to the skirts, and these were brief

'Let me tell you, boys,' she announced in a voice of brass and with an unmatched compound of effrontery and enticement, 'that once when I was in the Maternity Ward – as a nurse –'

Roars of laughter.

'I wish you'd let me go straight on. You wouldn't have been to blame if I'd been a patient!'

Roars of laughter.

'I was being courted by a spry young thing of sixty-odd. He wanted to be a patient of mine – as he wasn't good for anything else. Not knowing, of course, just what *did* happen in my ward. "Well," I said, "you *would* have to be ill, very ill indeed, if——"'

Roars of laughter.

Dicks ordered pints once more and Prescott drank at once. He was pleased with the way he did that. 'Show them I can carry on without a tremor,' he thought.

Miss Bennett had changed her nurse's uniform for the tight habit of a street dancer dress and was kicking out with carefully calculated abandon. Prescott had no illusions about her performance, but it seemed right enough,

because it made a piece with the evening. 'Tolerance, that's it, always tolerance!' Nevertheless he happened to look up just as she had passed through the swing doors after her performance, and her face shocked him. It looked cross and tired, almost disgusted, and really coarse, instead of shewing merely a broad *bonhomie*.

Immediately he was singing "Cockles and mussels, Alive, Alive-o", which had started before he was aware of it. The fate of Sweet Kitty Malone affected him, brought tears to his eyes. He would, he told himself, have been a kindly patron of hers had he, too, trod the streets of Dublin's fair city. He dwelt profoundly on the notion that a hundred men were singing about a dead girl. Yet there was not a girl in the room to acknowledge their emotion for what it was. That was it, a great truth, they made men desirous by their withdrawal. They knew profoundly what it meant to be sung about, while their modesty or diffidence kept them apart in their own world. Men knew there were thousands of them and that they could not get at them. How right women were! *Savoir vivre*, that was it! Perfect comprehension! He went on marvelling at all that was implied by sex, and watched the girls who came on the stage with a peculiarly close attention. Each one appeared so modestly, securely protected of course by the presence of such a number of men, yet ready and able to assert and exploit all the differences of sex without giving away an inch of ground unnecessarily.

Smoking Concert

He doubted whether anyone in that audience saw this so clearly, felt it so deeply, as himself. Even when they had left the stage, and men with a rattling humour or sentimental tenors took their place, there flashed through his mind like a revolving light the knowledge of that world apart peopled by the wives and sisters and girls of the men in that room. Sublimely indifferent to the aspirations and the antics of their men-folk, they could afford to let them out on leash, that was it. They would resume their domination in due course. How they understood! 'Perfect comprehension,' he repeated to himself.

He knew all this, indubitably. But all that he could do about it was to buy another round for Dicks, Lawley and himself. This was masculinity, the other pole of life, and no woman would dare oppose his will by word, look or deed. He ordered the round; but finding that he would have been incommoded by more drink at the moment, he got up and went out of the swing-doors. To get to the place where he might relieve himself he had to pass through a billiard room. He was taken back a little by the faces of the men there; but that evening he did not despair of anybody, and he looked upon them cheerfully. The man in the next white-glazed compartment, whom he did not know from Adam, told him a story about a lady and a house-painter, and he caught himself laughing at this all the way back to his seat.

It was immediately after telling this story to Dicks and Lawley, who

appreciated it like the good fellows they were, and halfway through 'There is a Tavern in the Town', that it was borne in upon him overwhelmingly just what a thing was this future that was stretching out in front of him. He saw it as a solitary fight. There would be no taverns in the town for him. But he would struggle on with such tenacity that his friends, even though they would say nothing, would be lost in admiration. Sadly, nobly, he would go on. He thought with tears in his eyes of a sailor ploughing a lonely furrow. And at the same time he was quite well aware that this different world, that rendered so extraordinary his daily task of sitting at a desk and writing, came about through slightly heightened perceptions, an altered focus. He viewed himself slightly sardonically.

Nevertheless it was, in effect, true that his future was a noble one. With children to educate, he would have continually to wear the hair-shirt of poverty. He watched with a slight melancholy Dicks ordering another round. He himself had been spending money in that same extraordinary fashion while his family still looked to him for bread. 'And a little butter,' he told himself. 'Corsets, hats, shirts, shoes, kleen-esi, chair-covers, house repairs. And they love greengage jam. God, have I pulled them through?' He began to feel a little anxious, though still benevolently inclined to believe there was something fine in him as a protector. The pathetic notion that even the cat in his basket by the fire trusted him for his well-being

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wrenched at him suddenly in an intolerable way.

He was beginning, quite inexplicably he felt, to lose his grip a little, both of the proceedings and of that hitherto acutely realized philosophic position of his, when he suddenly found himself linking hands with the rest and singing 'Auld lang Syne'. It wasn't fair, when you weren't feeling emotionally strong, he thought pathetically. It was hitting below the belt. He wanted to tell one or two friendly groups about that, but he was caught in a surge towards the cloak-room. He lost sight of Lawlev and Dicks. . . .

He turned with aversion from a street girl who accosted him outside and then from a beggar. He felt that he could not possibly endure any more human contacts. He even mumbled to himself, 'Too many people in this world' . . . 'Of ours,' he added, in order to make the thing exact and correct.

At his terminus he ran into Strong and Hepburn, and in a cosy carriage he

had to shatter a deliciously dreamy state of mind in order to listen to some good ones they insisted on telling. He even found himself telling one or two himself. 'Alright, I suppose,' he yawned to himself, 'they're laughing, anyway.' But the thought grew with that familiar journey home, and he did not resist it and felt no compunction finally in accepting it, that he was doomed to mediocrity like the rest of men. He had an individually different wife, and children of his own creation, and that was all. And in spite of that, and of a bewildering evening, when he came to look at it, he felt good and decent when he stepped out of the train at his home station, saying, 'Cheerio!' to Strong and Hepburn, who were going on farther. There came to his mind the saying of a member of his old battalion when all his friends were accepting commissions and he was asked why he did not. 'Well, I thought we wanted one good steady private,' he had said. 'That's me,' he said, 'a good steady private.' 'Good night,' he called to the ticket collector.

The Miracle

by Frank O'Connor

THE night had been fine with a light wind and scurrying clouds. Towards morning, to the accompaniment of a rising gale, rain began to fall and fell with increasing violence till it turned into a regular downpour, and wakened the light sleepers in the convent with its fierce, pebble-like volleying against their window panes.

In the cemetery behind the convent there was nothing but the rain and the darkness, or rather the double darkness that the four high walls shut in; no sound but the rain thudding dully upon the grass and the rows of wooden crosses. But yes—in one spot the downpour had a sharper sound as it toppled from stone to stone, an irregular splash and gurgle that could be heard even above the rain and wind.

When the first light struggled over the walls a silhouette rose dimly against it; it was the silhouette of a marble trumpet that filled and overflowed unceasingly on to the tiles beneath. Gradually the figure under the trumpet outlined itself, the head thrown back, the right arm lifted to support the instrument, the marble wings folded behind the marble shoulders; a tall, soldierly figure above the rows of meek black crosses. The statue of the angel stands upon a pedestal at the foot of which is a little tomb that gradually fills with the rain-water he

spills from the mouth of his trumpet.

Shortly after dawn the nuns rose, and sighed as they looked out on the lenten greyness of their fields. They dressed, shivering in the icy morning air, and pattered noisily down to the chapel, their pecking voices shrill along the white corridors, their slippers flip-flapping, their beads and keys and crosses tinkling.

About two hours later a bell sounded, and the lay-sister opened the little grille in the front door. Standing in the porch she saw two curious figures; a man with a large bundle that looked like a bundle of rags in his arms, and a young woman. They were drenched, and two big pools had already formed at their feet. The man wore a long blue overcoat, and a dirty old cap, the drowned brim of which sagged over his eyes. The woman wore a black shawl drawn tight about the milky oval of her face. As the door-keeper opened to them the man raised his cap and spoke in a loud, threatening voice.

'We came to see the Saint's grave, sister,' he said.

'Oh, but this isn't the day,' she replied hastily. 'Didn't you know? Wednesday or Saturday, after three: those are the visiting hours.'

'We couldn't wait,' he said. 'And we're travelling since four o'clock this morning—under that,' he added, lifting his forefinger to the spilling sky.

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'I'm so sorry I can't let you in,' she said regretfully. 'You understand of course, if once we began —'

'What is it? What is it?' a jolly voice asked behind her, and Sister Clare, the bursar, came out

'This man wants to visit the cemetery, sister. I've told him he must come back on Wednesday or Saturday'

'That's right,' Clare added jovially, 'after three, after three!'

'Twill be no use Wednesday or Saturday,' the man replied flatly, 'no more than if you said the day of judgment'.

He half turned to go, then swung round on the two nuns and with one movement of his arm flung open his bundle.

'Look at him, will ye?' he cried with reproach in his voice.

As he tossed off the accumulation of rags they saw a bright wakeful, boy's face with two great black eyes that fixed them mournfully. It was as if those grave eyes had been turned in their direction all the while under the wrappings.

'Your son?' asked Sister Clare.

'My *only* son,' he corrected her. 'Only *child*. And he never walked since he was born eight years ago'

'Poor little darling!' murmured Clare sympathetically. She took the child's cold cheeks in her two hands and kissed him.

'Last night,' the man's harsh voice cried over her head, 'I heard it. I heard it as plain as I hear you now. I said it to you, Birdie?'

'You did,' affirmed his wife without looking up.

'You didn't want to come?'

'You said to leave me imaginations till the weather cleared.'

'I did. I was in dread the child would catch cold'

'And I got up and dressed him myself, dressed him and wrapped him up,' the man continued triumphantly, his eyes blazing with passion. 'With me own two hands I dressed him. Did I as much as make a cup of tea for meself?'

'You did not.'

'I didn't. And still you wouldn't believe I'd set out on me own. There you wor, sitting up in the bed, and I turned round and I was going out the door, and said to you, "Woman, woman, will you come or stay?"'

'He did, sister, he did. Them were his very words.'

'Poor creatures!' exclaimed Clare. 'And you mean to say you've had nothing to eat?'

'No, sister. He wouldn't take a bite even when the lorry stopped in Mallow.'

'I would not,' the man said emphatically. 'Would you stop if the Lord called you? What did I say to you? Did I say, "No man must delay the Lord when the Lord calls?"'

'You did.'

'Will I go and get Sister Margaret?' asked the door-keeper timidly.

'Never mind,' said Clare. 'I'll get her myself. Sit down, poor man, until I see if I can get the key of the cemetery.'

Sister Clare padded off and roused old Margaret from her devotions. Margaret was cranky. She had rheumatics and knew the sort of people that came to convents at that unearthly hour. She wished the door sister would have a bit of

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sense. Look at the wetting she was going to get all on account of this nonsense!

'Never mind,' said Clare, 'give me the keys and I'll go myself'.

'You'll do nothing of the kind,' said Margaret sourly. She always resented the suggestion that she was getting too old for her job.

She spent a deliberately long time searching for heavy boots 'that wouldn't cramp her feet', for shawls, for a good umbrella, and Clare was ready long before she had found them. At last they went downstairs together. Margaret did not pretend to see the 'tramps' as she called them, and stalked noisily out, opening her umbrella, clanking her keys and complaining loudly at the inconvenience to which thoughtless people always put her. Clare beckoned to the 'tramps', and they fell in, humbly and silently, behind the two nuns. The rain thumped on the umbrellas that wavered before them, seeking a path through the wind.

As she opened the cemetery gate Margaret swung round on the man and said with a snarl:

'You ought to have more sense at this hour of your life than to bring out that unfortunate child in the rain. But of course it won't matter to you if he gets double-pneumonia from it!'

'The Lord knows his own business best,' the man replied gruffly.

'Ech, you and the Lord!' growled Margaret with unintentional irreverence. 'You make me sick.'

The rain was beating about them with a perfect abandon of malevolence. Margaret lifted her skirts and hobbled

at a run to the little shelter where the pilgrims were wont to sit. Covered in ivy, and hung with crutches, surgical boots, beads, crosses and scapulars, it had no furniture but a low bench placed beneath the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Margaret sat down and watched the others glumly.

'Go on!' she said scornfully.

'Kneel down and say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys with me,' directed Clare, determined to keep up her athletic optimism under old Margaret's fire; and putting a bit of bagging on the edge of the tomb, she bravely knelt on it. Without a moment's hesitation the man knelt in a pool of water beside the grave, and his wife followed him. Clare gave out the prayers and the two 'tramps' answered them. At every response the man looked at the child in his arms as though awaiting some miraculous transformation.

'In the name of the Father and of the Son -' Clare concluded, and rose.

As she did so, the man tossed aside the heap of rags that hung about the child, stood above the tomb that was filled to the brim with water, and before she could protest had put him standing in it. The child screamed and old Margaret gave a squeal of rage.

'Aaaah, you madman, you madman!' she cried, and ran out of the shelter towards him.

'Let him alone, now, do,' he said.

He removed his arm; the child stood alone for a moment, then toppled helplessly, face forward, into the icy water. He screamed again. His father bent forward and lifted him with one arm.

'Walk!' he shouted,

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'Let him out, let him out, you fool!' hissed Margaret at his elbow

The man put out his other hand and saved the child from falling again.

'Walk!' he said, and pushed him gently forward.

The boy put out one leg timidly, he drew it back and put out the other. His father let go of him once more.

'Walk!' he said remorselessly.

And then the miracle really happened, for the child began to walk. Sobbing hysterically he tottered from one end of the tomb to the other, the water reaching to his middle.

'Do it again,' his father said commandingly. The nuns were now almost oblivious of the elements, even of the child, as they watched him perilously traverse the little bath, drenched and shivering from shoulder to heel. Margaret made the sign of the cross.

'Again,' the man rapped out. The child's strength was clearly giving way; his progress grew slower and the legs bent under his weight. But his father was satisfied.

'Praise be to you, God,' he said at last, lifting the child out of the tomb, and putting him on the ground by his side. 'Catch his hand, Birdie, and we'll walk him down.'

'Say an act of thanksgiving,' suggested Sister Clare.

'And carry him down,' added Margaret solidly.

After this the man was taken to the gardener's house where a dry suit and overcoat were provided for him; the mother and son came to the convent and had their clothes dried. They had

breakfast together; the man was very loud-voiced and complacent, and ate a great deal with no suggestion of embarrassment, but his wife was very shy and only nibbled at her food.

The whole community gathered to say good-bye to them and embrace the child who had received such a signal mark of heavenly favour. The man shook hands with them all, one by one telling them very loudly that he knew when the Lord was speaking to him; he wasn't the sort of man who would raise a false alarm. By way of thanksgiving, the Mother Superior gave him a ten shilling note. This he received and pocketed, not without a certain amount of surprise, but with no undignified expressions of gratitude.

From the windows the sisters watched him go down the avenue, with his wife, the child, for their especial edification, being made to toddle between them. Then when he got tired his father bundled him up once more, and they set off at a quick pace for home.

All that day and for several days after, the community was in great glee and could talk of nothing but the miracle. Only old Margaret seemed in the least dissatisfied. At moments her nose would rise like a shining red island in a wide sea of wrinkles—a sort of involuntary grimace of distaste, which was immediately followed by a quick grab for her beads or a hasty sign of the cross. But her only expression of opinion was when she mentioned to an old crony that, thanks be to God for his infinite mercies, you couldn't expect to get used to miracles after you reached the age of seventy.

Anne

Ashley Smith

SUN-TANNED girls were walking along the grass-edged pavement. Young men swinging racquets walked by their sides. John Dean recognized one or two of his neighbours, wandering off, in their uncertain fashion, to the swimming bath. He noticed how their mild eyes gazed unseeingly at the dish spread before them day after day: the solitary trees that the energetic builders had left, as if grown suddenly tired of razing and despoiling; the patches of bush between the new houses; the evening sky rich with ragged colours . . . Dean, in his dark city-clothes, felt that he was an impostor. Even if they had ignored his clothes and examined only his thoughts they'd have been puzzled — and worried their kind heads over him.

His wife opened the door for him. The two children were at her heels. Donald, with his sleepy eyes and modest humble expression, crept almost underneath his feet. And Flossie imitated him. Dean picked Flossie up. Donald solemnly took hand-grips on his trousers and tried to walk round and round his legs. Dean limped into the dining-room. He could feel Flossie's plump belly pressing against his chest. She put her arms round his neck, beaming with trustful benevolence.

At the tea-table his wife waited for

him. Dean grimaced as he set the child reluctantly on the floor. Her face was very close to him, as she still clung to his neck. He marvelled at its tender beauty. He remembered Floss as a new-born baby. Her crying at night had woven itself in a nightmare fashion into his sleep and dreams. He had lain awake, torn with anxiety, wondering desperately whether he were strong enough for the responsibilities of fatherhood. She had had plump sagging cheeks, and her tiny screwed-up eyes set narrowly together in her tapering conical forehead. Now her eyes were wide and clear and brilliant, the soft contours of her rose-cheeked face were perfect. Such beauty seemed impossible of accidental achievement. Where, from the food she had eaten, the oxygen and nitrogen she had breathed, had come the careful smoothing into beauty of her cheeks, the cleanness of her eyes? Where, from out of the elements, had she drawn to herself her beauty?

From the child he looked to the mother. There was the mature source from which this unlearned untouched beauty had come. There was more subtle a marvel still.

Dean stood up suddenly, brushing his knees. Donald began to bang together ceaselessly his spade and pail.

Ashley Smith

'Stop that,' said John lightly

Donald continued without the slightest pause.

Dean spoke to him sternly. Donald was unheeding. Dean was driven almost frantic by his son's sleepy disobedience. He did not want to break the child's will, but he too could not surrender. His wife crossed to Donald and took spade and pail gently from him. The clattering ceased. Donald was left quite happy

'Shee - shee,' said Flossie in her almost incomprehensible language.

'She wants to go to sleep. Will you take her up, Donald?'

Donald took his sister's hand and led her to the stairs. He would help Flossie to scramble into her cot, then they would help each other to undress. It was a game to them both.

Husband and wife spoke desultorily to each other. It was meal time. They were indifferent to each other. John did not look directly at his wife. He spoke in his slow sarcastic fashion. Anne collected the cups and saucers and plates. She disappeared into the kitchen and called back from there.

'The children are looking so well since we came here. I'm ever so happy about them.'

'Where's the paper?' John said, fidgeting in his chair.

Anne came back from the kitchen.

'There's another report about Samson's speech,' she said slowly. She looked at John anxiously. He did not hide from her his momentary unhappiness and longing. Then he gestured the past away.

'I'm going into the garden,' he said casually. The gardens made a vast

fenced oval of open ground between the houses. It was twilight but there were many gardeners still moving about in the oval. Phosphorescent streams wavered from the nozzles of hosepipes. Lurid flames and billowing smoke showed where fires had been lit to burn gathered grass and leaves.

Dean went into the tool shed and took spade, fork and hoe. He wanted to prepare a fresh patch of the vegetable garden.

A plump freckled young man nodded to him cheerfully as soon as he appeared, and Dean nodded back just as cheerfully. The young man pushed his roller a little further over the bumpy lawn.

'I bought a packet of seeds for a penny, and every blessed one of 'em's come up. How d'you find this garden business, Dean?'

Dean regarded him amusedly for a moment, then his face clouded and he looked up reluctantly at the window of the room where his own son was lying asleep. He lowered his head and began to dig. The vegetable patch was not many yards square. Even when he had turned it all he could feel no strain of iron toil.

Dean rested on his spade. He watched the bands of colour sink behind the earth's jagged rim. *They* were going beyond the horizon.

Then he heard his wife's soft voice calling his name, just once, from the house. He felt the strength of the bond that linked him to the young wife preparing supper for him there in the kitchen. His chains were not fetters to him but freedom . . .

The Escape into History:

A Study of Gibbon by Frederic Clayton

I

‘It’s appalling,’ said Henry Wimbush in *Crome Yellow*, ‘in living people one is dealing with unknown and unknowable quantities. One can only hope to find out anything about them by a long series of the most disagreeable and boring human contacts . . . No, give me the past. It doesn’t change; it’s all there in black and white, and you can get to know about it comfortably and decorously and, above all, privately – by reading.’

He was surely a great reader of Gibbon. The *Decline and Fall* is his sort of book, and Gibbon is almost his sort of man – less explicit, less self-conscious, but not unlike. In boyhood, continual sickness helped to nurture in Gibbon an aversion to the personal contact in its most crude and obvious form – at school. ‘I secretly rejoiced,’ he says, ‘in those infirmities, which delivered me from the exercises of the school, and the society of my equals.’ In all the records of his early manhood, history seems to loom larger on his horizon than people and things around him. It is a suggestive contrast, to observe Gibbon reading *Memoires Militaires sur les Grecs et sur les Romains*

while in the militia carrying out manoeuvres of his own. His *Journal* goes into details about the tactics of battles long ago; he dismisses his own ‘mimic Bellona’ with the words, ‘Had a most wretched field-day’. ‘Nothing would be pleasanter,’ said Henry Wimbush, ‘than to read in a well-written book of an open-air ball that took place a century ago. But when the ball takes place to-day, when one finds oneself involved in it, then one sees the thing in its true light. It turns out to be merely this.’ Field-days or balls, it was all the same. ‘In the evening,’ writes Gibbon, ‘I went to the rooms. As Tuesday is the Ball-night they were very brilliant and to me very disagreeable.’ When he tried to analyse himself on his twenty-fifth birthday, he decided that he was ‘proud, violent, and disagreeable in society’. However unsupported by other evidence, this analysis does indicate Gibbon’s attitude towards society, and the difficulty he found in conforming to the standards of his sociable age. It was partly that the society of country squires – and he had no footing in any other society – threw him back upon himself too much

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in his earlier years. To their pursuits, as Mr G. M. Young says, he was not drawn. 'A race meeting was just tolerable because it reminded him of the Olympic games: an election furnished instruction in English manners.' At Oxford, his conversion to Roman Catholicism was not due to any new acquaintance but to books, to history, to the logic that was later to prove too much for the mathematician-tractarian H. G. Ward. To books mainly was due his abandonment of that faith. Naturally enough, he was inclined to be priggish about this bookishness. 'My only resources were myself, my books, and family conversations – but to me these were great resources.'

Of course, he developed. There is a great difference between the shy, sensitive scholar of the earlier portrait and the successful, aggressive character of the later and better-known one. But there are indications that people were still only the background. He once confessed that all he looked for in society was polite attention and easy manners. He wrote his *Autobiography* six times, as if in sheer delight at reducing life to paper. Like Henry Wimbush, he knew little of contemporary politics. At any rate, he consistently backed the wrong horse – the rotten borough, the French monarchy, the Government's American policy. He was never exuberantly sociable. The early shyness left curious traces. He was always averse to argument and its acrimony. To dominate lightly and easily in a smooth friendly chat was what he liked, and he found

Lausanne more agreeable than London in so far as it allowed him to dictate his own terms of social intercourse. He does not shine in Boswell. Partly, Gibbon and Johnson could not stand each other, and so Boswell would naturally do Gibbon less than justice. Partly, we may suspect, Johnson insisted on being an Augustus, a republican autocrat, in his conversation, and Gibbon wanted a whole empire for himself. 'We are told,' commented Johnson, 'that the black bear is innocent, but I should not like to trust myself with him.' And Mr. Gibbon muttered: 'I should not like to trust myself with *you*.' Nor was he ready to trust himself to any scene that threatened to be painful, as witness the letters he wrote to his stepmother. 'delicate health and spirit like yours are agitated even by the pleasure, the tumultuous pleasure, of an interview, and that pleasure is embittered by the painful foresight of an approaching separation.' He is very elaborate, very polite. but it was himself he was sparing

About most people and most things he did not feel strongly. Indeed, he confesses as much. He was the extremest of extroverts, passionately addicted to facts and liable to consider nothing else worth while – nothing, certainly, within himself. 'Feeling,' he cries, 'is only a turning back upon ourselves.' 'The wandering of the imagination', he regards only as a mental lapse. It is partly for this reason that his real character seems to elude us, to refuse any intimacy. Partly it is the strange

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mist of conventionalism spread over the eighteenth century, the 'living by formulae', the 'humbug', at which Carlyle's gorge rose. It is a wrapping-up of things, a 'use of words to keep real experience of life at arm's length'. It is also Chatham acting the sick man, Mrs. Thrale gushing over *sublime* verse, Boswell and Co. honouring the immortal Bard of Stratford by every sort of celebration except the recitation of the said Bard's *sublime* works. It is Gibbon saying that 'the cheerful flow of unguarded conversation may employ the leisure of a liberal mind' and then flying into a temper because someone has been unguarded enough to catch him out and contradict him. The *Autobiography*, of course, is full of it. The significant thing is, that it should somehow creep into the *Journal*. He calls it *Ephemerides, or Journal of My Actions, Studies and Opinions*, and then proceeds to stand on ceremony with it. One feels that he hardly knows how to be intimate with himself, still less with a diary, which can chill most of us into some sort of reserve. And sincerity talks with the same formulae as anything else – so where are we? A young man bores Gibbon for three days – he tells us as much – and then, at the end of it all, we are told that in him 'the virtues of the heart make up for his not having those of the head'. Do they? For Gibbon, of all men?

Looking deeply into things was not a habit of Gibbon's. This is evident in the *Essay on Literature*, in which, it must be admitted, he does himself less than justice. Literature for him means

classical literature; and after boldly assuming that it must surpass all subsequent literature, and that it cannot be properly appreciated without 'a minute acquaintance with antiquity', he contrives to justify the scholar's passion for collecting every single fact that can be ascertained. 'The manners of the ancients were more favourable to poetry than our own' because 'the ancient republics of Greece were ignorant of the first principles of good government.' And, thanks to the amphitheatre, says Gibbon, the classics can teach us something about zoology. No classical don could claim more. But soon he comes to his real subject – the thing that he calls philosophy. 'It is a gift conferred by heaven upon a few: it consists in the power of going back to simple ideas, of seizing and combining first principles. . . . History to a philosophic mind is what play was to the Marquis de Dangeau. It sees a system, connections, and consequences, where others can discern only the caprices of fortune.' And Tacitus, we are told, is the true philosophic historian! Both Tacitus and Gibbon were too apt to believe in the application of certain 'principles of human nature', in 'the noble generalization', in a philosophy which appears to fit best at a distance from the events, when the evidence has been diminished to convenient proportions. The *Essay*, indeed, is not concerned with the present. It does not discuss, as a fundamental question, the utility of history. History was interesting: it was what play was to the Marquis de Dangeau. Perhaps one

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should not expect either Gibbon or the Marquis to explain the utility of their intellectual hobbies. But one is a little curious, especially when Gibbon elsewhere defines history as a uniform tale of human vice and misery. Not without interest in this connection is the sequel to the Boswell anecdote of the black bear. 'The common remark as to the utility of reading history being made: JOHNSON, "We must consider how very little real history there is; I mean real authentic history. That certain Kings reigned, and certain battles were fought, we can depend upon as true: but all the colouring, all the philosophy of history is conjecture."

'BOSWELL, "Then, Sir, you would reduce all history to no better than an almanack, a mere chronological series of remarkable events." Mr. Gibbon, who must at that time have been employed upon his History, of which he published the first volume in the following year, was present, but did not step forth in defence of that species of writing. He probably did not like to trust himself with JOHN-SON!' No: Gibbon's empire was still in his library.

II

And thither he would escape, to 'destroy armies of barbarians' and to put characters into pigeon-holes. If Johnson had the last word at The Club, Gibbon could have the last word here. He could write – surely not without malice – of the tyrant Maximin, 'sav-

age and sanguinary', because he remembered how in his humbler fortune, he had waited before the doors of haughty nobles – Lord Chesterfields? – to be denied admittance by the insolence of their slaves. He could amuse himself with a portrait of his earliest and his only love, Suzanne, as the empress Athenais Eudoxia. As for himself, why, he was Julian the Apostate, and a blessing on all apostates. Not that such pretty parallels ever interfered with history – except, perhaps, in the detailed description of Athenais. But she was beautiful, and for Gibbon 'beautiful' meant 'like Suzanne'.

'The philosophical fable,' says Gibbon, 'which Julian composed under the name of the Caesars, is one of the most agreeable and instructive productions of ancient wit.' In it, 'the vices, the defects, the blemishes of their (the Caesars') respective characters were maliciously noticed by old Silenus, a laughing moralist, who disguised the wisdom of a philosopher under the mask of a Bacchanal'. Character-drawing of this sort was a speciality of Julian Silenus Gibbon; swift, incisive pen-portraits. 'Gallienus was a master of several curious but useless sciences, a ready orator, an elegant poet, a skilful gardener, an excellent cook, and most contemptible prince.' There is no doubt that he enjoyed this sort of thing, this historical caricature – character-drawing, that is, which is little concerned with subtlety or colour. A few bold lines and the thing is done. 'And it dawns upon the

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mind of the reader,' says Professor Black, 'that what he is engaged upon is not a reflection of reality but a brilliant literary picture, a shadow show, in which the puppets are controlled by the strings of the operator.' But it is more spacious than a shadow show. There are armies of barbarians, there are Goths sweeping over the Danube. It is a pageant, carefully produced, with a sense of control and direction always behind it, with the tempo varying at the will of the producer.

This is apt to shock the historian, above all the scientific historian. But history will never be entirely a science, and the *Decline and Fall* remains a triumph of history as an art, and the more so because it is not without scientific method. The absence of a philosophy has disturbed more readers than the artistic treatment. It is not difficult to see what disturbs them. It is the Augustan spirit, the spirit of Gibbon's age – apparent here again. So bland, so precise, it is yet fundamentally vague. It was an age when men talked in rounded periods – in itself, a highly suspicious circumstance. It was an age when to deal out a weighty generalization was enough. Most critics show a desire to read things into Gibbon, to draw out the fundamental convictions he seems to imply. Professor Bury points out that 'the triumph of barbarism and religion' naturally presents a problem, and suggests that 'the meaning of the philosophy of history is misapprehended, until it is recognized that its function is not

to solve problems but to transform them'. The trouble is, that Gibbon himself seems so blandly unconscious of the problems. He refuses to be surprised at the fall of Rome. 'The decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness . . . The story of its ruin is simple and obvious' Too simple and too obvious. Has he, asks one critic, some vague notion of applying to history a biological theory, that each organism contains the germs of its own decay? He may have, but it looks quite like the Greek doctrine of hubris. And, in fact, he seems to keep changing his mind.

But when people talk of the philosophy of history in the airy manner of Coleridge, who said that Gibbon had none, we may suspect that they mean its soul, its spirit. They feel vaguely that all the best histories have personalities, like Herodotus and Carlyle, or mythologies, like Thucydides and *The Dynasts*. They feel that these histories do not scientifically leave dead bodies for dissection. They are alive and have souls. You may abhor Carlyle's soul. You may abhor Macaulay's. You may say that one is summed up in Henley's 'Unconquerable,' and the other in 'Land of Hope and Glory', but you cannot ignore them. Gibbon is different. Gibbon is the sort of man of whom one is sometimes tempted to say that he has no soul. It is his concentration on facts, his lack of feeling, his superficiality, his conventionalism. Nevertheless, his history is not one of the dead sort. Every

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But the fascination of the *Decline and Fall* is dependent upon its superficiality. If Gibbon had had to deal either with the mass of information subsequently brought to light or with any complicated issues in his own mind, his history would not have been written. He would have been unable to dominate his material, and that domination is what fascinates the average reader. To open Gibbon is to fall into a day-dream of the intellect. For Gibbon's style is the perfect expression of intellect and reason. The style is always there, always obvious, always insistent, and gradually we succumb to the illusion that the tangle of events is being guided and controlled by the style, and by what that style represents, reason and intellect. 'I am building a great book,' he said, and that is what, in effect, he has done. He has built for himself, and for us, a secluded and impregnable world. Impregnable, because it almost defies criticism. While you are reading him, Gibbon is never wrong – not even about the Byzantine Empire. 'In the second century of the Christian Era the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind.' To read that opening sentence is to fall under the spell, to escape with Gibbon into his library of shuttered book-cases.

We are so impressed by the structure of the history, by its being all an entity, all Gibbon, that we are sometimes tempted to think his main merit was a sort of organizing faculty. Metaphors, mainly architectural, have been exhausted in attempts to describe Gibbon's gift for planning, his talent for putting things in their places. It is this particular form of domination over his material that is practically the first to impress us. In the face of his masterful handling of facts we willingly become uncritical, and are a little hurt to be disillusioned by the historians. Partly it is a matter of selection – what Lord Morley called 'bridging distances of place and circumstance'. In this, Gibbon's instinct was unequalled. For it *was* an instinct, a matter of art, not science. Of *Quellenkunde* he knew nothing, and it would only have interfered with his spontaneous, individual method of writing history. On that score his contemporaries were not inclined to criticize him, and it is hardly worth our while to complain, even when he combines Tacitus and Caesar, with a century between them, to make one satisfactory picture of Germany. Mrs. Montagu said that she thought the book so far good, as it gave, in an elegant manner, the substance of the bad writers, *medii aevi*. Gibbon certainly does that, but if that had been all, it would have been little enough. The inestimable Tillemont and others, as Horace Walpole was quick to point out, had done as much before. But Gibbon would follow neither Tillemont nor Voltaire slavishly. He himself dealt

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rigorously with the original materials, having his own standards, which differed from both of theirs

These materials left him awkward gaps to fill. More than once Gibbon himself points out their deficiency. More than once he reminds us that he is conjecturing from the principles of human nature. With him it is an axiom that 'similar manners will be produced by similar situations' and he acts on such assumptions . . . What was it that Johnson had said? All the colouring, all the philosophy, of history was conjecture. Well, was it any the worse for that? It needed a philosopher to conjecture properly. And better a conjectural colouring than a thing of shreds and patches. The historian is an artist . . . In the first volume he says tentatively 'So strong and uniform is the current of popular passions that we might almost venture, from very scanty materials, to relate the particulars of this war'. But elsewhere we find him borrowing straight from Tacitus, from Cicero, from Herodotus, to describe parallel situations. We see him colouring boldly and highly the barren accounts of his miserable originals. But there is a sureness of touch about it that defies criticism. When he says, 'Amrou divulged the dangerous secret that the Arabian caliphs might be created elsewhere than in the city of the prophet' we may say this belongs to Tacitus: but had Tacitus any better right to it than Gibbon? Boldly and skilfully all the gaps are filled in. Gibbon will dominate everywhere. 'At the distance of fourteen centuries, we may be satisfied

with relating the military exploits of the conquerors of Rome, without presuming to investigate the motives of their political conduct.' Of course, of course: but only Gibbon could presume, with that disdainful flick of the pen, to make almost a virtue of ignorance.

But, if the worst come to the worst, there was always the subjunctive mood — the subjunctive, as the Latin grammars have it, of tentative assertion. It meant filling in the picture with mere sketches and light pencillings: but it did fill in the picture somehow and make a complete whole. Gibbon complains somewhere of the inflexibility and awkwardness of the English subjunctive. But he used it more and more, as he went on, with or without provocation. To him that mood was like strong drink: at first a refuge, it became a habit. He surely had no need to say, 'The refusal of the Byzantine court might excuse an equal, and would provoke a larger measure of retaliation', when he meant that it did provoke a larger measure. And it is hard to forgive such sentences as 'The chances of superior merit, in a great and populous kingdom, as they are proved by experience, would excuse the computation of imaginary millions'. But there would have been more of it, had Gibbon been able to revise further than page 32. He wrote in the margin '*N.B.* — Mr. Hume told me that, in correcting his history, he always laboured to reduce superlatives and soften positives'. A too strict regard for veracity might have made both style and matter distressingly soft.

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III

For the style is, above all, one of balance. That was the style of the age. Nowhere does it seem so right, so inevitable, as in Gibbon. The charm of antitheses, of phrases arranged in double and triple patterns, of the balanced, geometrical style generally, is that it gives an appearance of regular design to the real chaos of causes and effects. An illusion? Perhaps. But it may be largely a subconscious illusion both in the mind of the reader, and in the mind of the historian.

It moulded Greek prose, and one may say that Gibbon's is the only English prose like Greek prose. How satisfying to live in a world where statesmen 'balance the demands of justice and policy!' How satisfying to get the strangest of human emotions neatly docketed by referring to 'the warlike fanaticism, which advances to seize, and affects to despise, the objects of earthly ambition'. Almost he persuades us there is nothing more to be said.

Partly, no doubt, because there is so much of Gibbon, one feels that never since the Greek sophists has a prose-writer of repute depended so much on antithesis; and their example must remind us that antithesis can be the most tedious of stylistic devices. Surely the charm must wear off long before the sixth volume? Yet, however they may vary in their explanations, the critics all agree that Gibbon's style wears extremely well. Partly it is because he had an ear for rhythm as well as an eye for symmetry. The

swing is so musical that it is hardly noticed. Partly it is because he discovered infinite variety and subtlety in the repetition of the same device. 'The people was less numerous, but the times were more savage, the prize more important . . .' The balance here is weighted on one side. Incidentally, he makes us feel that it is two to one on the papal elections being more rowdy in the second period. There is a mathematical precision about it. 'The sons of Constantine seemed impatient to convince mankind that they were incapable of contenting themselves . . .' So far the balance, scarcely perceptible otherwise, has been stressed by alliteration. the impatience to convince mankind equalled the incapability to content themselves . . . 'with the dominions which they were unqualified to govern' One may feel that he has overdone it. It is dazzling, unreal. But no style can be dull with sentences like that.

Above all, Gibbon had a subtle mind. His style is not obvious because the workings of his mind were not obvious. It is well known that he would compose each paragraph in his head, before committing it to paper. One would not have guessed it from the paragraphs themselves. They always demand close attention: they sometimes baffle an average reader. Though he professed no high opinion of mathematics, he had the mathematician's faculty for perceiving the less obvious connections and relationships. He loved exactitude. He is always applying the general formula

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to the particular case. For him the Crusades, a strange, incalculable offspring of barbarism and religion, are best explained as the sum of a geometric progression, of 'the infinite series, the multiplying powers of example and fashion' To any romantic that must seem as rigid as Euclid. But some of his paragraphs are Euclidean in other ways. He makes apparently unconnected statements, and links them up with a third. $A = X$, $B = Y$, $A + B = X + Y$ Or he leaves one phrase hanging in the air till it is proved by later developments. Again and again paragraphs are built round theorems or generalizations. 'The power of the sword is more sensibly felt in an extensive monarchy than in a small community. . . .' And the rest of the paragraph proves the theorem bit by bit. Or take the beginning of Chapter vi, with its logical arrangement.

1. *Ambitions realized never satisfy.*
2. *Severus realized his ambitions.*
3. *And only wanted to perpetuate his family*
4. *He was passionately addicted to astrology.*
5. *He had lost his first wife.*
6. *He chose a second, with the help of astrology*

The sentence about astrology hangs in the air for a moment. It is mathematical and artificial to get in all your reasons first not, to most minds, natural. But Gibbon's method leaves no ragged edges, and we soon appreciate the effect without noticing the cause.

Other paragraphs, such as that on 'popular clamours' in Chapter xiv are amazingly geometrical in the underlying logic that determines their construction. But Gibbon's peculiarities appear in smaller things too. There are subtle ellipses and sudden innuendoes, thoughts left out and thoughts half in, and all the mannerisms which provoked Coleridge to say that the effect was that of looking at a luminous fog. Less respect has been shown to this criticism than it deserves. For it is not so very wide of the mark, whether applied to Gibbon's mind and its bland 'philosophy', or to the style which reflects that mind. Both mind and style achieved a totality. In certain moods, totality is what we most desire. In others, stars, twilights, will-o'-the-wisps, seem infinitely preferable to universal fog, however luminous. There is Gibbon's 'escape', and there is Coleridge's. But if the criticism is confined to style, no one conversant with the later chapters could deny that the historian can sometimes be very foggy, while still preserving his appearance of luminosity. We have seen what the subjunctive did for him, and he has another mannerism of the same sort. He loves to imply motives in single words, and he moulds his sentences, with peculiar economy, into self explaining narratives. Early enough, simple examples of this trick can be found. We are told that an emperor adopted the talents and ambition of his nephew: the action and the attitude of both parties are welded into one. The nephew was ambitious. The

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emperor saw his talents. So the nephew was adopted as the emperor's successor. But this slight density of atmosphere later becomes a fog indeed. The best example is Mr G. M. Young's. 'The honest indignation expressed by Martin, vice-praefect of the island, was interpreted as evidence of his own guilt; and the governor was urged to the necessity of turning against his breast the sword with which he had been provoked to wound the Imperial minister.' Implication has in fact become complication. . . .

IV

Of the footnotes Gibbon says that the public importunity had forced him to remove them from the end of the volume to the bottom of the page, 'but' he continues, 'I have often repented of my compliance'. His repentance was surely unnecessary. Anyway, it is as footnotes, as marginal references or impudent appendages, that his readers know them, and they contribute something to the structure and the tone of the history. The footnote can be used to give a more decided bump to the seasaw of irony. 'That artful and intrepid Batavian, whom his enemies condescended to compare with Hannibal and Sertorius -' Civilis is high up indeed: Gibbon means him to be high up. But he cannot resist the temptation to add a footnote - 'Like them, he had lost an eye.' Or again, describing the persecution of the Catholics by the Arians, he works up to a climax of horrors - 'the breasts of tender virgins were

either burnt with red-hot eggshells or inhumanly compressed between sharp and heavy boards' - and we are here reminded in a footnote that 'the difference between the Homooousion and Homoiousion is almost invisible to the nicest theological eye'. From footnotes we derive the epigram of Caracalla on his brother's apotheosis (*sit divus, dum non sit vivus*) and the primitive Soldiers' Chorus, which celebrated the virtues of Aurelian (*mille, mille, mille occidit*).

But, the notes being footnotes, there is no escaping this question of Gibbon's 'rage for indecency' which Porson so mercilessly attacked. Perhaps it was after Porson's attack that Gibbon repented of moving his notes from their decent obscurity at the end of the volume. However that may be, there is a passage in his journal worthy of the censorious critic's attention. It is about the sixth satire of Juvenal. 'Some things perhaps might be retrenched from those too faithful descriptions, which, while they condemn vice, are apt to inspire vicious passions.

. . . Juvenal has even been reproached with gratifying the pruriency of his own fancy. Yet the horror which he uniformly testifies will always persuade me that his warmth proceeds not from the flames of voluptuousness, but from the fire of indignation and genius.' Gibbon and Porson and their contemporaries were not very subtle psychologists. Apparent vagueness they detested. How far that attitude goes hand in hand with fundamental dishonesties is a matter worth considering. Anyway, they surely would have been puzzled by the cen-

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tures of Augustine Birrell and Mr. G. M. Young. The first complains of the variety of Gibbon's indecency – 'It is the offensive variety which is overheard sniggering in the notes.' The second says, 'It is the quality of it that is so repulsive'. To Gibbon and Porson the quality of indecency was never strained or diluted. There could be no vagueness in defining the morality or immorality of Gibbon or of Juvenal. 'My dear Sir,' said Johnson to Boswell, 'never accustom your mind to mingle virtue and vice. The woman's a whore, and there's an end on't'. We are not so sure about it nowadays, and it is not as if Gibbon had no excuse for introducing indecency. There is nothing more exasperating than the historian who exclaims vaguely, *O tempora, O mores!* After all, satirists have wasted much virtuous indignation on emperors who wore silk tunics and acted in the theatre. There are degrees in profligacy and even Gibbon, over the immense length of the *Decline and Fall*, could not be always satisfied with 'the noble generalization'.

'Well, captain,' says Peacock's Dr. Folliot, 'even in these tight-laced days, the *obscurity of a learned language* allows a little pleasantry.' Both the phrase and the camouflage were Gibbon's, and it almost appears as if, anticipating the tight-laced days, he left the way open for a future expurgation of his history. A Victorian Mrs. Montagu, unlucky enough to know Greek, might spare her blushes by cutting out the notes. But, after all, it was a compromise, and not very satis-

factory as such. In the text, Gibbon is sometimes indignantly moral, and in the *Autobiography* he doth protest too much, undoubtedly. And, while his most unpleasant stories generally have their place, he sometimes inserts comments that are entirely out of place.

Of course, he was chastised for his attacks on Christianity as well as for his indecency. That is an old story. But the *Vindication* is not as satisfying as some would have it. His veracity and accuracy as a historian he certainly vindicates, but he betrays the curious shiftiness that was his worst quality. Two of his most notable remarks about Christianity are those concerning the responsibility of Providence for its spread, and the responsibility of the female element, the old women. 'Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author.'

'But we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church.' He then proceeds to give his five causes, taking care to make his survey so exhausting as to leave no room for a first cause. And it is obvious that a first cause of such magnitude ought to leave little room

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for secondary causes. A reader who knows his Gibbon will observe the grave, concealed irony here, as well as the more obvious sneer in the other remark, 'Christianity has in every age, acknowledged its important obligation to female devotion'. Yet in the Vindication he asks us to admit that he has 'expressly allowed the full and *irresistible* weight of the first great cause of the success of Christianity'. He has evaded the main issue, and taken refuge in irony, as if it were not an offensive weapon but a handy smoke-screen. Concerning the old women, he is even more shameless. 'Religion,' he cries, 'may accept, without a blush, the services of the purest and most gentle portion of the human species; but there are some advocates would disgrace Christianity, *if Christianity could be disgraced*, by the manner in which they defend her cause.' Here he almost seems to be playing with his adversary by escaping from one ironic ambiguity into another, even more cunningly concealed.

But, after all, he evades the issue. Round this central fact – the fact of evasion – crystallize, in some sense, many facets and reflexions of his character; the art of irony, the art of implication, the luminous fog, the conventional mask. When direct and open religious controversy was in the air, he sat on the fence – a very narrow fence – and, like the young man in H. G. Wells' story, had one reply to every argument 'So you say!'

V

It was hardly to be expected that Gibbon should evade death, though, to do him justice, he kept it for some time at a becoming distance. While he was calculating – by sound generalizations on the laws of probability – that he still had at least ten years of life, his physical condition was such as would have sent most people long ago to consult a doctor. He seems to have felt an unusually strong aversion to the certainty threatened by medical consultation. It was a thing to be wrapped up and forgotten. At last an operation became inevitable. It was followed by two more, and still there was no improvement. He talked of a 'radical cure'. It was very Gibbonian – two strong words to put these distressing physical facts in their place. On January 14th, 1794, Lord Sheffield left him in London to go to Sussex. No one, least of all Gibbon himself, seems to have thought he was dying. On the 15th, he assured a visitor that he was 'a good life' for ten, twelve, twenty years. On the 16th, he died.

He had planned new works whose loss may be deplored. But, in spite of this, and in spite of the laws of probability, his death was not an inopportune one. He had finished his history and had added the autobiography, its perfect companion. There was something aimless now about his researches. His world, too, was no longer secure. The Augustan age was fast finishing. The French Revolution had bewildered and

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shaken him, as nothing had shaken him before, and the next generation was, in one way and another, imbued with the spirit of that revolution. It revolted, as all younger generations do, not against the belief or unbelief of its elders, but against their complacent assumption that they had settled things satisfactorily. So Gibbon found no one in the next age to befriend him. Shelley's conviction of the necessity of atheism did not make him any fonder of Gibbon than Coleridge. Like most of his age he admired him at a distance. Gibbon's style was imitated by Macaulay: he received tributes from Byron, Carlyle, Thackeray, Hardy. There is that much justification for Alice Meynell's claim that Gibbon possessed the nineteenth century. He possessed it by the sheer immensity of his achievement, but he did not enter into its confidence – witness the Address prefixed to the 1837 edition of the *Memoirs*, which the great ironist ought to have appreciated – 'He was, indeed, made for the work to which an all-presiding Power had appointed him and was a mighty though unconscious labourer in the construction of a temple of illustration and evidence for the reception of a Volume to which, it is to be feared, he was a secret enemy.'

Almost, for his evasions, he de-

served this epitaph. Almost he deserved that Newman should constantly read him, candidly admire him, and completely disregard him. Nor is Newman the only one to have so treated the *Decline and Fall*. For Gibbon keeps us all at a distance. He does not, like Carlyle, ask us to share his excitement, nor, like Macaulay and Froude, does he try to enlist us on the side of his prejudices. He takes no one into his confidence. Witty, urbane, eloquent, he conducts us at leisure through his waxworks, or temple, or pageant-hall, and himself supplies the perfect commentary. It is all very impressive. Most of us fall under the spell, but we feel that it is a spell. If we penetrate into the *Autobiography*, the exhibition workroom, or into the *Journal*, the really private room, we discover a little more. We discover an interesting acquaintance, a little on his dignity, a little old-fashioned, and certainly elusive. We may return to his history again and again, but it will always be the same. There is always that suggestion of a daydream with its ultimate awakening, and always that dimly perceptible reserve. Always at the last he will bow us out, still unsatisfied, and we shall leave him, as he wrote of Lausanne, alone in Paradise.

The Climb Into Life

by Randall Swingler

WHICH way is ours? We have started so late. Evening has begun to brown. Distant gradients confuse in sombre skiagram, unstable as mountain cloudforms. And we must begin to hasten now, we two, loosened from our safe anchorage in shade, and driven forward by an urgent pressure, as it were a cold hand squeezing and releasing the ventricles of the heart. Here the light is already filmy, where the straight eye falters, inactual and sinister as deep parts of the sea. While we can succumb to our limbs' concise working, relieving the tension, and the gritty fog-breath in our throats, that is enough. But soon the cold hand contracts our source of energy again, cutting off the present like steam from a funnel, invisible under the vapour of a dissolving future. We started so late. We look out into impossible distance.

ii

The two of us. Let me crystallize my thought on that. We are running, I in front, he behind. The paths are slippery dark mud: we must watch each step. Aware of the dun resentful valley, the little burn, horribly sinuous, making a comfortable way between marshes. I in front, he behind. And when I turn, I do not see him. He is still behind. But I know him there.

And I begin to know what he is like. I know that in some way he resembles me. I know that in nearly all ways he is the precise opposite of me.

iii

We are running up into a throat, on which the hills with their incalculable pervading power, converge. Always they are terribly over us, closing on either side. And slowly they deepen the shadow. Yet I am warm still in my central forehead from memories of the farm, where from the beginning contented they fed us, fulfilling their office. By large fires a multifarious meal and sensual comfort. Back there they lived naturally to perform that task. We the vague missionaries, committed behind our time.

iv

And it was hard to go from there. They sent this one at my heels, seeming at first but the shadow falling outward of their influence in me. Him whom I never see, but who is always so close upon my heels that I may not stop or slacken. When I am lost in my speed, I lose him too and his harassing morality. For I hate him for his domination, that he demeans myself. But his speed and direction are lovely in perfection.

And now the flickering of my feet is hypnotic. But if I raise my eyes, I

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shall find the evening closing in like walls. Yes: the air is slate-grey, a cooling ash. Richer in tufts the brown of the rushes as the flush over a stag's hide. These shaggy flanks of the hills, all we are destined to see. But above, we know of the impassable scree, the black implacable rockheads, standing apart

v

And now I must figure a thing at once trivial and portentous, for the strangeness it awakened in my flesh. They were terrifying, monsters of my dream, as they loomed up through the mist, in slow motion, like the shadow of aeroplanes on cloud, disquieting the measure of my progress. How should I presense them, who had been never warned, denizens of that median region? These horses, with their own heavy fear, showing us strangers in this median region. Sometimes they would disappear into the mist, while we ran on, absorbed in the track. Then they would bulge from the darkness again, blocking the way with horror and despair and questioning. Until we saw them for what they were, and had outrun them.

vi

We have come to the gullet of the valley, where it is dark as central earth. Only just at the foot of the climb. Here are many mouths open, waters rush down. Against black rock the rowan splashes, a slight explosion of colour. It is very cold. We must begin to calculate the ascent, assessing the chances. Sun, long invisible, has been utterly drained out of the air. We must take cognizance of the husky pelt of the hill,

wary for sudden drops and vicious jags of shale it conceals. We must scrabble on the damp face of the map, willing it to be luminous; fidget with compasses, make a pretence of responsibility. Darkness in palpable waves swirls up like smoke between our knees, drowning the feet, confounding us. But the sky holds still an illusion of brightness, limned in contrast to the fells: and it becomes our treasure.

vii

Climbing upwards is like some motion in nightmare: slow hanging steps, suddenly encountered vacancy, paralysing jars. We crawl on bellies, hands splayed like lizards in the grass: dare make no forward step untested. The arc of the hill is faint, a mirage, not the summit. We may not hope for the summit while the hills are watching, closing in. The sky, too, begins to sag upon us with its nameless power. Pitifully small in a wind that makes our shirts as paper, in a baffling air, on a deceptive ground, we are abroad in the confusion of multitude: By the casual touch of rock, by the ventriloquial voice of water, trying to govern a path. Sensitive as antennae now those hands, conciliating on the stringy grass, on the wet rock hooks of determination. The edge of the air is ragged with the noise of falling, falling water, careless, a supremely maddening voice.

viii

We knew that too far to the right was Cautley, a sheer plunge through empty feet of air. Where water, leaping wishless with a harsh song, scatters and

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is air, released like the soul. That way was scattering too for us, the snapped curve of our life, a sudden leap into nothing for us for ever. Too far to the left, waited the nude waste of trackless tableland, where we should wander, lost and petering away between the metallic sky and the invertebrate heights. Between these, taut is our tight-rope way in its rainbow arc, reaching earth at the homelight of my determining.

ix

Here the vocal water grows more confusing. It forks above us and falls down two separate ways on either side. Over to the left intuitively we moved to cross to swing ourselves under and through the sharp force. It drives from head to toe, down the grooved spine, moulded belly, between thighs like a shock. That shook me with the real terror of destruction. I begin to straighten like a rod. For darkness is now complete. And I move in almost complete separation on my hang-fire journey.

x

It is now the roots of despair begin to move. Dark has washed away all sense of objective. I cannot any more comprehend the essential octave of my existence. Midway insulated between birth and death, I judge all things by time alone. At the top of every wave the curve flattens; time is distilled in that suspension of the rhythm. I think back out of this inimical earth, to the farm where we were all receptive: sat in our corners observing mysteries, responding at random, lyrical with

laughter. In those exotic spheres projected no metric of time. Like rainbow fish in crystal bowl we lived, looking on all a pictured world. Sudden sending away was our first longitude into cylindrical time, distending toward age. That was first grief, our measurement of loss. And looking over steep horizon, fear.

From there was landscape all the time receding. Always more uncertain under my touch. Translation of living into code. Looking all the time over a steep horizon . . .

xi

In the middle of that memory I heard his cry. I stood quite still. The cry went wheeling around me like bereaved birds. He had fallen over. Too far to the right. I knew he must be dead. Death leaves his sharp telegram in that cry, incredibly lost, unbearable musical beauty. He must have wandered away from my irrelevant thought, ever further and further from my reach, over to the right. And then his straight swoop over with the water, formless now, with the calling air-voiced water.

xii

And I am alone. That was the passing of my youth: nothing but a voice in the air now. Urged no more to emulation of that other self who haunted my desires with his challenge. No more relying on things that my hand reached for: totally surrounded by darkness: I am alone. Who was always alone. And now without exhilaration or anxiety I begin to perceive my aim, the home-light. I stand

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unaware of my body, knowing that I have reached the watershed. I recognize him standing naturally up in me, the field on which all history meets, all men, all blood, all breath. Living is about me again as a globe.

xiii

Single I stand in the very throat of all winds that here in full stridor truly I face them all about me whirl with noise. Sinister and surreptitious they were in the gulleys, mere wisps of rumour, or sudden buffeting manifestoes of defiance. Now verily opening their brazen throats at me, who seem to quiver, beautiful and sensitive like reflected sun from metal in the strong vibrance of that atmosphere. Listen, the sinuous east, with its oblique twist to all truth: the alluring vagrant promissive west: that bombast, cynical annihilator of small braveries, that we may recognize as the desperate north: this scented whisper of luxury, the fleshly breath of the south. Here at this pole of life, poised over time, I raise my arms, the gesture of impotence. At once, who have never known the drawn reality of suffering nor the bared face of unrelievable pain, find myself cruciform above the labouring world. This darkness I gather overbrimming in my arms, is the suffering at all times real to me; the suffering of men whose eyes reproach me for my inequality, for an illness which my fathers gave me. Truly it is I that bear in me the misery of all the world. I who have never suffered, can never now be absent from the claim of their suffering. Let me be

understood. This is no willow-bending of pity, but the necessity of my reciprocal nature as man. If there still suffers but one in all the world, it will come to me. Had I but a little starved, suffered oppression, despaired, for what I now have, then were I an equal among you all by that alone: content as the runner with sprawling on grass after his race. I too knew the dark mile, walk purged and spare, a deserver of fortune: may now with equanimity regard another's ordeal. No, but am now alien. Having been always secure, sure of my bread, supervised by guardians, backed by capital. How am I a full man, while any wants for life? How am I content, and any moans for unbearable pain? Who have learnt what happiness can assert, what a freed man is potent to do, have shaken hands with the true security. Crucified by this my responsibility, I hang from my drawn arms, wondering how time will tear my feebleness apart; my body sagging down in the vacuum of its inadequacy.

xiv

Resting there wrapped in all winds, I mused on that coming upward. How heavily sleep had seduced under the bluffs where the mist hung, where the folds were closest. To melt in sleep to an interstellar world, forgetting the conflict and the urgency of stalking darkness. To lose identity, blurred with these legendary hills, the mountaineer's valhalla. How heavily that sleep seduced; and the return to the farm: to its unsaddling of all responsibility, substitution of aerated water for blood,

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care of other arms. To live again under the motherly shadow, under the breasts of ancestral trees, on the lap of memorial lawns To fondle trophies, family prowess, keeping anniversaries. To return to the farm and its shadow. or often the mean itch to exploit the narrow ghylls which branched off every way, for a short cut, or to display a certain knack: and so to emerge on the sterile back of the fell, between two void surfaces, bare and alone

xv

I see how all the surface of that time was plotted by the currents of fear. The urgency (only apparent) of time, night pressing (so late we started), confinement to a strict path, estranging us from the valley's natural denizens and the true proportions of our area. How the failure to prove adequate to him, my desire's familiar, inverted my own aspiration to an undercut of hate. He, the presence from which I was not able to escape, but whose unspoken admonition I must be perpetually striving to evade. Thus was the beginning of suspicion, self-concealment, pretence. Inverting of energy, weakness at diaphragm and knees: creeping in serpentine anxiety: cringing self. By all its competitive friction it could be seen how that part of the climb was netted with the tissue of fear; the lens of self-regard narrowing. Now that the darkness has taken him, I feel the white electric heat of my chthonic bond, bared of its insulation. I know the impossibility of isolation, with this radiation of living

wires webbing my thought and feeling in the nexus of creation.

xvi

But there in the valley, the horses, the horror of the stream, all vicissitudes revealed my tenderness out of the protection of the mothering shadow: sensitive in surrounding play of the sun, as bulbs from the dark are white. I go with my mother's sap warm in me, infusing my imagination's loam. Let me beware that I do not keep her foliage, varnished leaves lolling from imitation-chinese carafe. Fertile for me and shady in its time; but I am advanced beyond that mensurate shadow, journeying towards my source, the fulfilling sun; the sap swelling in me, branching out into my own verdure, my green desires. The swift increase of young requires transplanting. Overladen by mother's umbrage, the sapling dries up, is a wan growth. Let me beware of clouding our relation with illusion, the hallucination of time petrified, youth's skeleton trapped grotesque in amber. No nervous irritation is so rasping as obvious falsity, with its constant tremor of fragility. Clear separation preserves for both the clean unison of moving sap. Intuitive living accepts the fibre of each relation in its indestructibility. Love oftener requires the purge than the assurance of practised blandishment.

xvii

Yes, I see now how it will be. Here a whole man starts on his true journey. Before this was discovery, pursuit of a mirage of personality. And now that

The Climb into Life

he stands up in me whom I feared, truly is spirit with shadow merged. While he stood opposed to me, lightning to my opaque background, he was unreachable as my shadow, and hated for his inaccessibility. But as accepted dark moulded my true form, his image faded. I knew him at last to be nothing more than the shadow thrown outward by obstructed light in me. Began to feel positively that light pervading my tissues, pushing outward to touch the intimate darkness of the world. Now a single power, poised over a patterned world.

xviii

Now I see, it is only our relations, general as with the world of life, particular as with the equal living of men, give us reality. Here with my reservoirs of latent power, the arrowy light arrested in my adapting body, I am nothing. But through this dividing thought, these branchy muscles, this defining skin, through this whole prism my force of life shall radiate its coloured designs. Here are the beams reflected which form beyond me the objective world at every moment is swarming and flooding about my tingling sense. From here my responsive beams strike out wherever anything awakes my love, being what it is. So must all chance be welcome to me for what it brings, the evocation of my power, while I wish to make no thing less itself by making it mine. And so will time stream away inviolate below me like a water-race, that sweeps down all that fall upon its flat recession, but may not break nor bend the bar of light which lies across

it nor the patterns its ripples make under the bank. Only who stretches out his hand to possess some dead branch of business, property, or self-pride, he is drawn down and carried away with his branch in the regress of time; swept over the weir, is lost and forgotten in the falls of death.

xix

Soon I must start the descent, keeping up slightly to the left, high on the slope. Remembering still the treacherous mass of shale below me, the derision of its sliding clatter. Remembering the possibility of pitiless rain, defeating utterly with its insensible opposition. The danger of the negative snow if I tend too high, the danger of straight fall into precipices. The danger. The possible derision. But I shall go down simpler, ready, totally unexpected, a free one, loving life insatiably, the fulfilled outgoing of my nature to men; unresentful, exacting no destructive judgment, but giving always, and not inquisitive for return. Purging myself for life's free expression through me. Now in my thought is fixed the conclusion of my journey, the home-light, clearly seen. In this darkness impossible to assess its distance. But in its moment acceptable as sleep, the cadence of a day, fine of my splendid curve.

xx

It is time to rise now into act. I seem to have been brushed by some immense aura of gentleness. To my diffidence the dark itself is kindly. These round stones. Below me the shale.

This Town and Salamanca

by Allan Seager

I

So when he returned, we asked him why had he gone to live there and he said he'd just heard of it and thought it might be a nice place to live in for a while. He had lived in an old house built around a court. The walls were four feet thick and the windows were larger on the inside than they were on the outside; the sills slanted. They kept goats' milk there on the window-sills because the stone made the air cool. You could see the sticks of a hawk's nest hanging over one corner of the roof, and Jesus the landlady's son – he looked up here to see if we thought it was funny that a man should be named Jesus, but none of us said anything. We read a great deal – he often whistled to it evenings. Yes, the food was good. They had a sausage with tomatoes in it that was very good and the wine was not like French wine, it was heavier and sweeter. And there were no fireplaces for heating but things they called braseros. They were big pans like that with his arms stretched and on cold mornings they set it alight and covered the flame with ashes. They would put the brasero under a big table. The table had a sort of plush cover to it that hung down to the floor with slits in it. You put your feet through the slits and wrapped the cover around your waist. Then although your feet roasted, you could still see your breath and you couldn't stay in the room long because of the fumes, and sitting by the brasero gave you chilblains but they were a common thing and no one minded. Klug asked him about the women. Were they – you know? The women were all right he said. The peasant girls were very pretty but they faded early and got fat. Yes, but, Klug said impatiently, but he was talking then about the riots, how they used beer bottles full of black powder for bombs and when they bombed the convent, the nuns all ran out crying and waving their arms after the explosion and some fell on their knees and prayed in the midst of the rioters but the bomb had not even chipped the wall, it was four feet thick. All the houses were like that with big thick walls and the streets were narrow and the town was quiet. They could not hang the washing in the courtyards because it was too cool for it to dry, so they spread it on rocks

This Town and Salamanca

beside the river when they finished. It was a very old town and they lived in the same way year after year. Gordon asked him about the spiritual remnants of medievalism. He answered that the people were very pious and went to the cathedral to pray for everything, even lost articles. The cathedral had small windows and the light was yellow inside not like the grey light inside the cathedrals in Île de France.[¶]

Well, I thought, as they talked on into the evening, it is not anything like that here. You see I remember this particular evening very clearly and all that we said, because it was the last time John had anything new to tell us, and from that time on, he has lived here with us in this town. We never thought he would settle here. It is a good enough town but nothing to the places he has seen, not even the kind of place you would close your book to watch if you went through on the train. First there are the ball-bearing factory and the electric bell factory, with the other factories hidden behind them; then there are trees hiding the houses with their backs turned toward you and vegetable gardens beside the tracks; and then you would see the spire, not of a cathedral, but of the Methodist church, and the town would soon dwindle away into the cornfields and just after that you could look at your watch to see how long before Chicago. It is not like Salamanca, but the four of us were born and grew up here and only John had gone away. And when he came home to see his mother, he would tell us these things that made us seem fools to our-

selves for having stayed but we were busy with our work and could not follow him. There are maple trees on both sides of the streets and in summer it is like driving through a tunnel of green leaves.

You see he never answered Gordon's intelligent questions and he always disappointed Klug who thinks that all the women in foreign countries wait on street corners after dark winking and motioning yonder with their heads. John seldom was an actor in his own play—he merely looked, it seemed, and told us what he saw. It was the best way, keeping himself out, but they would not admit it, so they kept on with the questions. They admitted it to themselves though. Klug said he thought of the peasant girls with their ankles shining under their tucked-up skirts doing the washing by the river bank when he was scrubbing his hands after taking the cancer out of Mrs. Gira, the Polish washwoman, and the nurse was counting the used wet sponges and the hospital smell made his stomach turn. And when the aldermen brought the plans of the new railroad station to Gordon and sat down to talk and object for hours, he saw the smoke drifting from where the bomb exploded and the nuns praying in the confusion and one of the aldermen had spots on his waistcoat that he kept picking at. Though we had nothing but questions when he came, we all knew that the questions were merely little signs to show that we too might very well have been there and seen these things, and that it was nothing

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more important than chance that we had stayed here. He talked late and I remember there was a bat lurching to and fro under a light down the street.

Mrs Gira got well though and it is a fine new railroad station.

II

He was in an old boat-house whistling. We heard him when we came down the path. The boat-house was so old the shingles curled and weeds grew on the roof, and we used to tell him that some day the whole thing would give way with him in it and he would have to swim out with the rafters round his neck. He had borrowed the use of it from Old Man Suggs who hadn't kept a boat in years. When we were kids I remember seeing it when we went to the river-flats to look for dog-tooth violets. It was a motor launch and he sold it when the tomato cannery started up. Every summer the river is full of blobs of red tomato pulp and no one wants to go out in a boat then. But John was building a sail boat. It was May then and he had worked all his spare time on it since the August before; every Saturday afternoon, and nights after supper he would go down and work by the light of three oil lamps he got from his mother. That was the winter we played so much poker and sometimes we would go to the boat-house at midnight and ask John to take a hand. He was always pleasant about it, without any scruples against gambling, but he never stopped working and we would

shout above the hammer blows, 'Where do you think you're going in this boat when it's finished? Going to haul tomatoes for the cannery?' He would laugh and say that a good many waters would wet this hull before she was much older. We would laugh because we knew he had got the phrase out of some book, and we would start up the path. The ripples on the water always shone in the lamplight and we could hear his hammer as far as the dirt road where we turned to Klug's house. Often we played till midnight. I won a lot of money that winter.

When we entered the boat-house we could see it was nearly finished. It looked very big and white and seemed not too much to have put a winter's work into. He was planing some teak for the deck, and when we came near there was the acrid leathery odour of the fresh shavings. We had seen pictures of yachts, and once or twice the ore boats on the big lakes, but the things we saw every day, the houses, trees and grain elevators, went straight up from the ground. They had roots. If they had not, as they seemed, been always in one place, they always would be. John's boat was a strange shape, curved for the water. Even in the dim boat-house, propped up with blocks, she seemed ready for movement. I looked at John with the handle of the plane easy in his hand, a carpenter's tool, and we were going to be 'professional' men, and I knew he would go away. The boat had sprung from some matrix within him that we would never understand, just as he was puzzled

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when Gordon asked him how long she was and how many tons weight as if she were a heifer fattened for market. When we went out of the boat-house, Klug said, 'So long, skipper'.

He went away in the boat as I had thought he would and after this he never came back for long at a time. God knows how he got the blocks from under her without any help, but one afternoon he launched her all by himself, and in ten days he had her rigged and the galley full of stores. He sailed away without saying anything to anyone, down our little river into the Ohio and then into the Mississippi and out into the Gulf below New Orleans. He was gone all summer into October. I saw him on the street when he returned. He was tanned almost black. We shook hands and I said:

'Where did you go? Did you have a good trip?'

He looked at me a moment before answering. 'Trip' means a journey you take in a car during your two-weeks vacation in the summer, maybe to Yellowstone or the Grand Canyon or Niagara. It is a relaxation from your work. I could see as I said it that 'trip' was the wrong word, but just how far wrong, it took me years to find out and then I never was certain. I thought of his boat, a strange and unfamiliar shape, and how he, whom we had seen unsuspectingly every day through his boyhood, had made it.

'Yes, I had a good time.'

'Where did you go?'

'Well, down into the Gulf and around.'

'Cuba?'

'Yes, I put in at Havana,' and then as if he had at last found something he could tell me, 'you know, Klug would like that place—they've got a park there where you can get free beer. It's owned by a brewing company and you can go there and drink all you want, free.'

'Where else did you go?'

'Oh, the Tortugas, Hayti, Vera Cruz.'

He showed me a gold piece he had got off a pawnbroker in Port-au-Prince. He said it was a moidore. He was nineteen then.

III

When he returned next time, he was less reticent. It was not because he was proud of being a traveller but more, I think, that he saw we really wanted to hear about the distant places he had been. When his boat was coming into the harbour of Singapore, he said you could see the junks waiting with their crinkled sails. And when the ship came near, they sailed right in front of the bow as close as they could. Sometimes they didn't make it and they all smashed up and drowned. He said they did it to cut off the devils following behind. The day after he told us that Gordon asked Tom Sing, who runs the chop suey joint, if he believed in devils but Tom only grinned. Gordon said it was the oriental inscrutability. Gordon is quite serious.

During the next ten years John did all the things we said we'd do that time

Allan Seager

in the apple orchard. He joined the army to fly and left the army after a time and went to Italy. I went to his house from the office the day he got home. He was dressed in white, lunging at himself in a long mirror with a foil in his hand. The French held their foils this way with the thumb so, but the Italians that way. After that he was a sailor on one of the crack clippers that still bring the wheat up from Australia, and from Liverpool I had a postcard with a picture of Aintree racecourse on the back. It said, 'Give Gordon my congratulations.' Gordon had been elected mayor and we were very proud of him. How John heard of it we couldn't figure out.

One time there was a card from Aden and another from Helsingfors. You can see he travelled. No one in the town had ever gone so far and people used to stop his mother on the street to ask where he was then, not that they really cared but because the thread that tied them to him as a local boy tied them also to the strange name his mother answered when they asked.

When he was a sailor in the Pacific, spinal meningitis broke out on board. Eighteen people died and they put the bodies down in the hold. The ship's doctor examined all the crew and said John was the healthiest and the captain ordered him to go below and sew up the bodies in shrouds and heave them overboard.

John got a roll of canvas, a reel of pack-thread, a leather palm-guard and a needle and went down into the hold. He rigged up an electric light in a wire

cage and swung it from a hook over his head. The eighteen lay there in a row. They were quite stiff, and when the ship rolled, sometimes an arm would come up and pause until the ship rolled back. But they were in the shadow and he did not watch them much because the sewing was hard work about an hour to each one. He jabbed his finger with the needle three or four times and that made it harder. When he got one ready, he would put it over his shoulder and stagger up the companionway to the deck.

High up above him beside the funnel, to escape the risk of infection, stood an Anglican parson, one of the passengers. He had an open prayer book and said the service very quickly the leaves fluttering in the wind. Then John would pick up the corpse again and heave it over the side. Sometimes a shark ripped the shroud almost as it hit the water; others he could see jerked from the ring of foam of their impact and carried quickly below. There were at least a dozen sharks and John said he knew his work was useless and he took bigger and bigger stitches in the canvas. There was quite a wind and John could never hear the whole service because the wind blew the words away but a few snatches would come down to him. He and the parson were all alone, the other people having hidden from fear; and they did not speak to each other. When John brought up the last corpse, it had been a Portuguese merchant from Manila on his way to Goa to see his daughter, the wind stopped suddenly and there

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was a moment of calm ' . . . to the deep to be turned into currupcion', the parson said. John picked up the merchant, balanced him on the rail and shoved him over and the sharks came

IV

'And Eloise said it was when she was getting the coffee after dinner Mr and Mrs. Booth were setting in the parlour and Mr. Booth was drinking brandy like he always does and both of them quiet as mutes at a funeral when all at once the door bell rang and Eloise answered it and there stood John Baldwin. My, I think he's handsome. Oh, he's much better looking than him. And he asked could he see Mr. Booth and Eloise said he could; he was right in the parlour. So Mr. Baldwin come in but he wouldn't give Eloise his hat. He kept it and said he was only staying a minute. Well Eloise said she went to the kitchen to get another cup naturally expecting Mr. Baldwin would have some coffee and when she come back through the dining-room she was so surprised she nearly dropped it.

'She said Mr. Baldwin was standing right in front of Mr. Booth and he says, "Dennis, I've come for your wife". Just like that And Mr. Booth says, "What do you mean - you've come for my wife?" Eloise said she got behind the window drapes so they wouldn't see her and Mr. Baldwin says, "Frances loves me. I want you to divorce her". Mr. Booth was drunk on all that brandy and he jumped up and began

to shout that it was damned cool and a lot of things about throwing Mr. Baldwin out of the house only Eloise don't think for a minute he could have even if he was sober. Why, John Baldwin's way over six feet and a sailor and always fighting with them little swords and all, but Mr. Booth got white, he was so mad, and Mrs. Booth she didn't say anything. She just sat there and looked at them and Eloise said it was like Mr. Baldwin didn't hear a word Mr. Booth said because he was looking at Mrs. Booth all the time and when Mr. Booth stopped talking Mr. Baldwin looked up at him quick like you do when a clock stops. Then he just says, "Well, Dennis", and Mr. Booth began to swear something terrible but he didn't try to throw him out, he didn't even come close to him. Then Mr. Baldwin looked at Mrs. Booth and smiled and says, "Come along, Frances", and Mrs. Booth smiled back and they walked right out of the house without her even packing any clothes. And that's all there was to it. Eloise says Mrs. Booth walked right out of her house into a new life, never to return. And Mrs. Booth they say has gone to Paris to get a divorce from Mr. Booth. Well, all I got to say is, it serves him right - he was always running around after them dirty little factory girls. Certainly he was. Everybody knows it. Why you know that little Muller girl, the one with the fox fur. Why Eloise says that. . . .'

I stopped listening then. I always liked to look even at the Italian flags on bottles of olive oil when I was a kid.

Allan Seager

I had the same feeling then: no one does things like that here, walking into a man's house and taking his wife. If you want a man's wife, you meet her by chance in Chicago and she goes on being his wife afterwards. Or maybe it was like the boat. We hadn't lived with him. He was only the things he had done and those at a distance. Now that he had begun his marriage this way I did not think he would change the pattern, but that was before I knew he intended to settle here.

He was, I thought then, rootless and invincible. He didn't seem to want what we had, what we had remained here and worked for. Which comes down to this, I suppose, and little more: the same trees every day when you go to work, in summer hanging over the lawns beside the walks, and bare with snow at the forks of the limbs and the sound of snow shovels scraping the walks; and when you look up, the line of the roof of the house next door against the sky. You could call it peace. It is just peace with no brilliance. I remembered how bright the gold piece was in his hand.

But he didn't go away again. He settled here very quietly and took a nice little house. He and Frances were very happy, and we all used to say how glad we were that they were so happy. We used to say it very loudly to ourselves and sometimes to him, and we put ourselves out to help him meet people. He had been away so long that he had forgot or never had known them. We got him into the golf club the first week he was in the bank. Everything we

could show him about the town we did gladly.

After he had been married a year, we all came to Gordon's one night to drink beer. Most of the evening we taught John poker, and after that we just sat around and talked. John said,

'You know Roy Curtis from out Fruit Ridge way? Well, he came in to-day and wanted to borrow ten thousand dollars to buy another hundred acres. That piece there by the bridge belongs to Dick Sheppard.'

'He'll raise wheat. There's no money in wheat now,' we said

'That's what I told him, but he wants to have a shot at it just the same. He offered a second mortgage. I don't know though. What do you think?'

We told him that Roy Curtis was a fool if he thought he could make money in wheat at fifty-six cents a bushel.

'He's got a combine you know. He says he'll have five hundred acres in wheat, and he and his boy can work it all by themselves.'

We remembered when he'd bought the combine. Five hundred acres is too small for a combine. This isn't Dakota.

'You wouldn't lend him the money, then? He's coming in Thursday. It's good security, a second mortgage on his place.'

We told him that we wouldn't lend the money, but John had drunk a lot of beer. He kept on talking about it.

'He's a smart farmer, Roy. Look at that house he's got there. It's a fine

This Town and Salamanca

place, as good as any of these here in town. Got a Packard and a big radio. Why, he said he got Rome on that radio the other night. He didn't make his money doing foolish things I don't know about the loan.'

Roy's aunt had left him money, but that was while John was away. We didn't tell him. I said.

'Do you fence any now, John?'

He got up laughing and went out into the hall and got a mashie out of Gordon's golf bag and came in with it. He began standing with a bent leg and one hand flung up behind him. He went through the lunges and parries laughing.

'Getting fat,' he said, 'I can't do 'em any more.'

I had to leave then because I had to be at the office early next day. John was still talking about the loan when I left. It had been raining and the wind

had blown down leaves from the maples. The evening had been unsatisfactory and I thought about it as I walked along. I was in sight of my house before I thought why, and I stopped to pick off the red leaves stuck to my shoes.

I remembered him in white with his face grave. 'You see, the French hold a foil this way. It's not like the Italians. I learned in Marseilles.' That was the way he used to talk. We knew all about loans; we knew all about him now. Of course I could never do more than just remind him of these things because he was so happy. But I did not think he would ever go away again to return and tell us these things, because of his happiness. Suddenly I felt old. It was as if we had trusted him to keep our youth for us and he had let it go. But our youth only.

Reviews

A MAN OF GOOD WILL

ENGLISH JOURNEY. By J. B. PRIESTLEY.
Heinemann and Gollancz. 8s. 6d.

THIS review may, without undue personal embarrassment, take the form of a confession – the confession, shall we say, of a typical highbrow, one of those people described by Mr. Priestley as ‘the sensitive plants of contemporary authorship’, even ‘one of our frigid contemporary sniggering rhymers’ to whom he refers rather bitterly. Let this reviewer confess, then, that except for a sixpenny pamphlet on the English novel, which left no impression on him, this is the first book of Mr. Priestley’s that he has read. It will not be the last, for Mr. Priestley has some surprising qualities, which suggest that the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow – which he, as a matter of fact, has done as much as anyone to foster – is a stupid affectation. True, there are emotional reactions in this book which a more intellectual writer would have guarded against. For example, in the Birmingham Art Gallery;

a friendly curator fished out some lovely specimens of Girtin and Cotman and De Wint. They have there a little *Harvest Scene* by De Wint – a tiny waggon or two, then a glorious melting distance of rolling country and sky – that I should dearly like somebody to steal for me. It lit up

my morning. All the years between Peter De Wint and myself were annihilated in a flash; he pointed and I saw, he spoke and I heard; and his mood, felt on that autumn day long ago, was mine. Whatever cloud of gloom covers Birmingham in my memory, I have only to recollect that corner of its gallery, to recall that stipple and wash of paint on a bit of board, and my memory is touched with colour, warmth, vivid life

Possibly such writing is no worse in kind than a kind of writing that passes as very superior – Mr. Clive Bell’s ecstasies in his latest book, for example. Possibly the difference between Mr. Priestley and Mr. Bell is not the difference between a ‘low’ and a ‘high’ brow, but merely the difference between two kinds of sentimentality. For what the critic objects to in Mr. Priestley’s description is not the fact that he was moved almost to tears by a De Wint, but the self-conscious baby-talk which he uses in telling us about it: the ‘friendly fishing’, all that is so little and lovely and tiny and dear, all so tainted with emotional condescension and a fundamental lack of seriousness. How differently Mr. Priestley writes about his typewriters – still emotionally, as of something he loves, but also decently and straightforwardly, as of something he uses and is used to.

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This book, on the model of Defoe and Cobbett and Arthur Young, is 'a rambling but truthful account of what one man saw and heard and felt and thought during a journey through England during the autumn of the year 1933'. As mere reporting, it is very competent journalism, Mr. Priestley can describe vividly and accurately what he sees and hears, and not for a moment, throughout his 400 pages, does his zest flag or his vocabulary falter. But the value of description depends on the point of view occupied. Detached objective observation is merely a scientific ideal, which even in the laboratory is seldom attained. When the object under observation is so vast as England, there can be no pretence of detachment. The very itinerary is an arbitrary selection; Mr. Priestley should have included some typical agricultural district, such as Berkshire or the Vale of York. In summing up his impressions, he finds three Englands: Old England, the country of the cathedrals, minsters, manor houses and inns, of Parson and Squire; the nineteenth-century England, the industrial England

of coal, iron, steel, cotton, wool, railways, of thousands of rows of little houses all alike, sham Gothic churches, square-faced chapels, Town Halls, Mechanics' Institutes, mills, foundries, warehouses, refined watering-places, Pier Pavilions, Family and Commercial Hotels, Literary and Philosophical Societies, back-to-back houses, detached villas with monkey-trees, Grill Rooms, railway stations, slag-heaps and 'tips', dock

roads, Refreshment Rooms, doss-houses, Unionist or Liberal Clubs, cindery waste ground, mill chimneys, slums, fried fish shops, public-houses with red blinds, bethels in corrugated iron, good-class drapers' and confectioners' shops, a cynically devastated countryside, sooty dismal little towns, and still sootier grim fortress-like cities.

and thirdly, the new post-war England

of arterial and by-pass roads, of filling stations and factories that look like exhibition buildings, of giant cinemas and dance-halls and cafés, bungalows with tiny garages, cocktail bars, Woolworths, motor-coaches, wireless, hiking, factory girls looking like actresses, greyhound racing and dirt tracks, swimming pools, and everything given away for cigarette coupons.

It is a brilliant summary; but it entirely ignores an England that persists alongside all these Englands, that was here before the cathedrals and will be here when the horrors of the nineteenth century and the shoddiness of the twentieth have long disappeared – the England of fields and farms, of beasts and fowl, of butter and milk and bacon, an England sadly used and politically neglected, an England in which enormous changes have taken place, and wherein perhaps a complete revolution must yet take place, but still the essential England, the England which still breeds the best brains and the best bodies, and still provides the one element of stability in a world of shifting forces and sliding scales of values. Mr. Priestley, in fact, is a typical townsman, to whom the country is

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only so much empty space between the towns. He loves it if it is beautiful, and is angry if its amenities have been spoilt by industrialism. But he is indifferent to its economic problems, and does not seem to realize how much the general well-being of a nation is bound up with its agricultural background.

Otherwise, Mr. Priestley is refreshingly realistic in his approach to economic problems. He would like to sweep away the small shops which thrive all over the squalid areas of industrial England. 'Even after you have given yourself the strongest dose of individualistic sentiment, it is hard to look at these small shops with anything but disgust or to find good reasons why they should not be promptly abolished. They are slovenly, dirty, and inefficient . . . One large clean shed, a decent warehouse, would be better than these pitiful establishments with their fly-blown windows and dark reeking interiors and blowsy proprietors' He is enthusiastic about some of the giant factories he visited, and whilst he notices that when properly run, the monotonous work of machine-tending is neither soul-destroying nor unpopular, he sees also the dangers attending a system of paternal employment, such as that of Messrs. Cadbury at Bournville:

Pensions and bonuses, works councils, factory publications, entertainments and dinners and garden parties organized by the firm, these are all very well but they can easily create an atmosphere that is injurious

to the growth of men as intellectual and spiritual beings, for they can give what is, when all is said and done, a trading concern for private profit a falsely mystical aura, can drape its secular form with sacramental cloths, and completely wreck the proper scale of values.

Mr. Priestley rightly insists on human values. His book is a passionate protest against their destruction by capitalism. He is angry, as all decent people are angry, at the heartless and bloody spectacle of our social heritage. But what is to be done about it? Mr. Priestley is not very helpful. He sees that though we may be under fifty different national flags, we are compelled now to serve under one economic flag. He sees that there is something tragically comic about our money system – something, he says, that belongs to the pantomime of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and not to anything more serious. But for the rest, he only offers us a spirited peroration:

Let us be too proud, my mind shouted, to refuse shelter to exiled foreigners, too proud to do dirty little tricks because other people can stoop to them, too proud to lose an inch of our freedom, too proud, even if it beggars us, to tolerate social injustice here, too proud to suffer anywhere in this country an ugly mean way of living. We have led the world, many a time before to-day, on good expeditions and bad ones, on piratical raids and on quests for the Hesperides. We can lead it again. We headed the procession when it took what we now see to be the wrong turning, down into the dark bog of greedy industrialism, where

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money and machines are of more importance than men and women. It is for us to find the way out again, into the sunlight

Brave words, and Mr. Priestley is obviously sincere – a man of good will. And men of good will, and not politicians or economists, who are all sunk in mental ruts, will save the world. Mr. Priestley has a great responsibility because he has a large public. He must not rest content with this book. Nor with any number of books on the same theme. He must stir men to action, and even take action himself. He must concentrate his attack. He might begin on Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

discover what it is, and with the tactful, invocation, at suitable points, of such passages from these and other canonical works as will inform him what Taste would dictate in this or that emergency.

Let it be said that Mr. Thompson is a Man of Taste, and that his Observations are always immaculate and sometimes interesting – the Observations of a man who really has undergone most 'kinds of good and bad literary experience' and has emerged therefrom with Sensibility unimpaired, even with Taste fortified. But there is no indication that Mr. Thompson has undergone kinds of experience other than the literary. The Man of Taste, in fact, appears to be that and nothing more – one gazing upon the world from a tower of synthetic ivory through Sensibility's flawlessly tinted windows.

The truth is, surely, that Taste has very little survival value in the modern world. To see one's function as the coaxing into existence of 'a truly modern sensibility', is to ignore the fact that heightened sensibility of any kind is a source of satisfactions only to people who, in its employment, endure no constantly unpleasant circumstance: a very small minority. To the rest, it is a source of anguish; and insensibility (cinemas and newspapers as anodynes: cf. *Culture and Environment* which Mr. Thompson wrote in collaboration with Dr. F. R. Leavis) is a functionally effective measure of self-protection. Producing Taste out of conditions non-conducive to the natural growth of Taste must inevitably be an artificial, an unnatural, process, even

TASTE WITHOUT TEARS

READING AND DISCRIMINATION. By
DENYS THOMPSON. Chatto &
Windus. 3s. 6d.

THIS book continues the educational policy of *Scrutiny*. It is a textbook of intelligent reading for fifth forms, aimed at the production of 'discrimination' and 'judgements at first hand, by the examination of some kinds of good and bad literary experience'. Mr. Thompson has collected about a hundred pages of poems and snippets of prose, receipts and stimuli for the required literary experiences, and prefaced them with certain Random Observations of a Man of Taste, filled out with a list of seven books from which the earnest reader may acquire Taste, or at least

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if it were a possible one. If *Scrutiny* could use some comprehensive social dialectic – Marxian, Catholic or Decadent (Spengler or Merezhkowsky) – it would become quickly apparent that no social disease is cured, no social body healed, by attempting to change the form of its symptoms.

And if Mr Thompson could have the opportunity of practising his theories in any but sheltered-minority schools, he would quickly discover that even those boys capable of producing the kinds of response he desires would cease to produce them, in all save one or two cases – cases of those who have *The Will to Taste* and would develop it anyway – immediately on leaving the class-room, finding them not merely irrelevant but positively dangerous in another environment. ‘Even those boys capable of producing the kinds of response he desires’: but by the time a boy reaches the fifth form his adaptation to environment has usually proceeded so far that he is *not* capable thereof, or only in a frustrated, vestigial degree. Sensibility, in fact, is past being coaxed into existence at the age of seventeen.

And before that age, *Scrutiny* theories simply cannot be manipulated. A short review is no place for setting out the descriptive mechanics of pedagogy. But it must be insisted, categorically, that during the formative years – the supremely important period is between the ages of eleven and sixteen – the process of class-teaching involves a dynamic relationship of essentially the same human kind as marriage, feud or

fatherhood, and that in this process such neat theories as those of the *Scrutiny* group, of which this book is one application, are psychologically unsound to the point of futility. In other words, they don’t work.

BLACK MONASTERY

BLACK MONASTERY. By ALADAR KUNCZ.
Chatto and Windus. 10s. 6d.

ALADAR KUNCZ died in 1931, seven weeks after *Black Monastery* was published in Hungary. It is seldom that institutions find their chronicler; terrifying things are generally experienced by the inarticulate. But here is an exception. Kuncz was on holiday in Brittany when war broke out. He was a schoolmaster and man of letters, a lover of France and her literature; a combination of practical and speculative man, as his book shows. He had likes and dislikes, but could discriminate between his prejudice and the truth. At the beginning of the war he seems nevertheless to have been a man of easily injured sensibilities. He emerges at the end with sensibility unblunted but sympathies greatly widened. The spiritual development of the author is conveyed as subtly as the breakdown of his health and nerves. The subjective side of the book is emphasized here, because it is kept so much in the background by the author himself. By the end we know Kuncz, admire and love him as a fine man; we know when to trust him and when not.

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He is not God in an internment camp with two hundred and forty odd men; but one man among many.

Kuncz was at a temporary detainment camp at Périgueux, then at Noirmoutier (the Black Monastery), and lastly at L'Île d'Yeu. The people he met there were diverse; tanners, waiters, cabinet-makers, artists, schoolmasters and schoolboys, an ex-cowboy from Barnum's Circus, a swindling count, sailors, carpenters, shoemakers, butchers. Their personalities were even stranger than their professions, and their idiosyncrasies grew with time. Uncle Sarkadi thought himself God. Demeter Bistrán, a prophet who had lost his hammer signalled to the star with lighted cigarettes. Kats declared war on rats, caught them in his hands, bore them off triumphantly to his bed, skinned them and hid their skins. Dr. Herz, beginning as a schoolmaster devoted to his Czech pupil, ended by holding a salon in L'Île d'Yeu, to which men came every day to pay him court. But in each case, however abnormal may be the phenomenon, Kuncz, as artist, stands enough aside for us to see beyond what Kuncz, the man, felt.

It is impossible to enumerate all the characters in this book, each clear, distinct and living, or to describe the incidents, which have merely a chronological connection. Some in themselves are perfect: the idyll with the American girl; the dispute over Lolo, the prisoners' dog; the attempted escape; Tutschek, who, when he heard his last child was dead and there was no

money for the burial, went mad and began to dig a grave in the courtyard for the child dead in Buda Pesth.

Though these many stories and incidents do not appear as inter-related, behind them is a development of feeling. At first there is hope in immediate release. This hope gives way to the acceptance of prison life, the endeavour to improve it, turning from prison life to the world of fantasy and books. This world then grows so real that fantasy creatures seem to people the rooms. That way madness lies. There is only fact left, fact and drink and gambling; and the belief in freedom one day, and that the world outside is beautiful. Thus some sort of acceptance is made of life at Noirmoutier.

But as soon as it is made the internees are transferred. The corporate body of prisoners is split, to be absorbed into a larger and more degraded community. New horrors, men turning more into women day by day, underground rooms with little light and worse ventilation in exchange for the draughty rooms of Noirmoutier. The only thing which supports them is the belief in freedom, in the beautiful outside world. Gradually moral and physical resistances are broken down. Health goes; nerves go. Influenza weakens. Delay demoralizes. Men go mad; others die.

At last they are set free. The prisoners are sent home. And those who are free run beside the train begging for food. The women and children beg for food from the under-

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nourished prisoners. In prison they could dream of freedom; free, they can dream nothing but nightmares. 'We had returned; from pain to greater pain.'

GROUPS.

THE MEANING OF THE GROUPS: A SYMPOSIUM. Edited by F. A. M. SPENCER. Methuen. 5s.

GROUP MOVEMENTS OF THE PAST. By RAY STRACHEY. Faber. 5s.

'BUCHMANISM, as the Groups are known to the outside world, is undoubtedly the most powerful religious movement since the time of John Wesley, may even rival the Reformation in its effects. . . .' As a part of 'the outside world'—one of those who do not speak of Dr. Buchman as 'Frank' except satirically—we may lack some insight into these effects of what, in our ignorance, we still know as Buchmanism. All the same, it is a little difficult not to feel that in this blurb the publishers are simply having fun.

The symposium represents a laudable wish. Buchmanism is a phenomenon of wide social and religious import. It is also a highly complex phenomenon, and as much froth is blown by its detractors as by its advocates, so that any corporate attempt to set it out in its various aspects, as it impinges on many types of mind, must seem praiseworthy. But, with all deference to that hearty blurb, Buchmanism

THE OCCASIONAL WRITER

IT is extraordinarily interesting to remark upon the number of those who have achieved literary distinction whose regular occupations were—and frequently continued to be—of another kind.

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Every editor knows the importance of 'fresh blood' in his pages, and, as a consequence, the editorial door is freely opened to the 'free-lance' who can present his subject in the proper form.

There is a right way and a wrong way of telling a story or of presenting a subject, and the right way must be studied and followed.

Now, this right way of doing things is not difficult to acquire, but one does not acquire it by instinct. It has to be learned from an experienced and sympathetic instructor, one who is competent both to guide and to criticize. Such instruction, in short, as that which is afforded by the London School of Journalism.

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is *not* The Reformation. And in any case, Mr Spencer's symposium does not clear the air at all. It is amateurish. Several of the contributors – Miss Evelyn Underhill and Father Ronald Knox, for instance – have won a right to ventilate their notions on religious matters generally. But none of them seems to have been sufficiently interested in Buchmanism to bring his full intellectual apparatus to bear; and we are presented with little more than a sequence of amiable essays ('perfect fairness' is apt to be a sign of apathy) which raise a little dust and make no effort to prevent it settling down again.

Mrs. Strachey's book – which first appeared in 1928, under the title of *Religious Fanaticism* – is a study of cognate movements in the American religious life of last century. Its publishers justify the reprint as throwing light on the topical subject of Buchmanism. As a fact, it is not really relevant. For, whatever one's attitude to the Groups – and an almost unlimited array of attitudes is possible – they are something thrown up by specifically post-war 'needs'. Buchmanism is a technique for coping with quite definite and purely contemporary forms of large-scale neurosis. And attempts to assess its significance must concentrate – drifting into no nebulous amiabilities – on two questions: whether the problems with which it sets out to deal are most apt for resolution by this particular technique, and whether the ends to which it directs the energies released in that resolution are univer-

sally valuable. In other terms, Buchmanism raises a psychological question and a sociological one.

An answer to the sociological question will have to take into account, on the one hand, the Marxian accusation that, essentially a middle-class movement, it represents a flinching from social problems (into a pseudo-democratic Mysticism For All) and, on the other, the Catholic accusation that it is anarchical, antagonistic alike to the spiritual and the temporal order.

An answer to the psychological question affords more scope. It will examine the four cardinal principles of behaviour (absolute honesty, unselfishness, purity, love) and the two-fold method ('sharing' and 'guidance') in the light of modern values: it will point out how complex are the concepts 'honesty' and 'unselfishness' ('love' even more so), and question their definitions as precise standards for behaviour; will ask – in an age where many people see chastity as the supreme impurity – by what right the Groups equate chastity with that emotionally supercharged word 'purity', which represents a value, in some measure, for every kind of human being; and, inspecting the psychical perils of promiscuous 'sharing', will also wonder how the mechanism of listening-in with a pencil should produce, in one case, precepts from a transcendent deity and, in another, the erotic phantasms of a *surréaliste* poem. Here is a thesis for some enterprising psychologist. So far as these two books go, it remains untouched.

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MORRIS

WILLIAM MORRIS. CENTENARY EDITION.

Edited by G. D. H. COLE. Nonesuch Press 8s. 6d

AT first sight William Morris is a surprising addition to a series which so far includes the selected works of Donne, Blake, Hazlitt and Coleridge. Perhaps the centenary suggested the enterprise; if so, we could wish that other centenaries were imminent – Ruskin's and De Quincey's, for example – because the series is an admirable one, extremely pleasant to handle and read, and generous enough in size to hold the essentials of an author. Mr. Cole's selection from Morris is sensible: he has realized that a modern public has little use for the 'Wardour Street'

romances, and concentrates on that part of Morris's work which is related to the problems of the present age, and which, incidentally, has far greater vividness of style. The poetry included is naturally of a more romantic order but even here Mr. Cole shows his bias by including *The Pilgrims of Hope* and *Chants for Socialists*. *News from Nowhere* and *The Dream of John Ball* are given in full, and account for more than a third of the volume, and nearly another third is devoted to a selection of Morris's lectures and essays. These latter writings retain their interest to a surprising degree, for most polemical documents of fifty years ago are by now very dead mutton. The reason for this comparative vitality is not far to seek. Morris, in art and in politics,

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PETER STERRY

Platonist and Puritan, 1613-72

By VIVIAN DE SOLA PINTO

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Reviews

was not a theorist, but an individualist swayed by a practical kind of idealism. He tells us that when he became a socialist, he was 'blankly ignorant of economics; I had never so much as opened Adam Smith, or heard of Ricardo, or of Karl Marx'. Fundamentally, his motives were always aesthetic. 'Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization' But when he comes to write his indictment of modern civilization, we find that, in his eyes, it fails mainly because it cannot secure the conditions necessary for the production of beautiful things. His doctrine of art and his doctrine of socialism are two aspects of the same integral attitude. In the light of modern developments it is easy to criticize the specific recommendations which Morris made; and it is particularly necessary to criticize his confusion of art and decoration – the lack, in fact of precise thought in his aesthetics. The conclusion of his lecture on 'Gothic Architecture' is almost pathetic in its inconsequence. But for all this, his general attitude is right. the ideal of 'a life to which the perception and creation of beauty, the enjoyment of real pleasure that is, shall be felt to be as necessary to a man as his daily bread'. Or in a more political formulation: 'It is right and necessary that all men should have work to do which shall be worth doing, and be of itself pleasant to do; and which should be done under such conditions as would make it neither overwearisome nor over-anxious.'

WASSERMANN

MY LIFE AS GERMAN AND JEW. By JACOB WASSERMANN. Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d

WHEN Wassermann died recently, Europe lost one of her greatest writers. How great he was is not yet adequately realized in this country, where only about eight of his twenty-odd books have appeared in translation, and where only two or three of these have reached more than a single edition. To make a bare assertion of his greatness will not convince a casual reader of this note, but if such a reader will overcome his apathy to the extent of looking at this short autobiography, he will find Wassermann's greatness in essence. It is a work of terrible sincerity, even of terrible pathos. Its interest is twofold: it reveals the psychological processes of literary creation in a man whose creative activity has been vast; and it reveals the life struggle of a Jew against racial prejudice and oppression in a country where those forces are strongest. Actually the two themes are interconnected, for the analysis of his development shows that the elements of his genius, in so far as they are not local, determined by the soil and landscape which he has shared with his German neighbours, are universal, above place and race, part of the heritage of humanity. Not that Wassermann denies his Jewishness; he is deeply conscious of it. What he does deny is the significance, for the right course of modern culture, of the racial principle itself. It is this theme that

Reviews

gives the book its more than literary importance, its political actuality. Written twelve years ago, this translation has an epilogue added since the revolution of January 1933; its dignity and resignation answer with beautiful finality the hatred and violence of the anti-semitic regime. Beyond Jew and Gentile, beyond any racial or religious oppositions, there is an absolute of love and justice. 'Indubitably,' says Wassermann in this book, 'the work of every outstanding author may be viewed as centring about one dominant idea. In my case, I believe this dominant idea is that of justice.' If we are tempted to seek a distinction between this idea of justice, and that idea of love which is more specifically Christian, we must at the same time be prepared to admit that only centuries of persecution could fill the imagination with the sterner concept.

FILMGOERS

FOR FILMGOERS ONLY. Edited by R. S. LAMBERT. Faber. 2s. 6d.

THE ambitious sub-title to this short book seems an unfortunate choice: admirable in their way, these five essays by different authors do not fulfil the claim to be 'the intelligent filmgoer's guide to the film'. The filmgoer of discrimination will probably find the chapter on 'The Development of Cinema' by Paul Rotha to be the only one of outstanding interest, but nobody, intelligent or otherwise, will be guided very far. 'There is a simple

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DENT

Reviews

ABC of films to be picked up,' remarks R. A. Lambert in his introduction, but even if this comforting statement is true, the reader on completing the book will feel that many letters are still missing from his alphabet. Very little space is given to the actual structure of the film, to the question of sound or to canons of criticism, and although the chapters are based on a series of lectures entitled 'Are Films Worth While?' no attempt is made to justify the film as an art form. The book is really a collection of varied propaganda for better films, and as such is both adequate and stimulating. It is always depressing to see how the cinema, more than any other form of entertainment, remains in the grip of commercialists, who naturally cater almost entirely for the lazy majority which peacefully takes what it is given. In 'Why we get the Films we do', Mr. Lambert makes a good study of mass psychology, pointing to incorrupt critics, specialized picture theatres, and amateur film societies as remedies for the lethargic public taste; the other contributors, especially C. A. Lejeune, also plead for a more intelligent approach to the screen. 'The problem between art and industry in cinema has still to be faced', writes Mr. Rotha, and although no solution is offered in these pages, the difficulties on both sides are treated clearly and interestingly. The book provides a groundwork for discussion, but it raises far more questions than it even tries to answer.

HUXLEY

HUXLEY. By E. W. MACBRIDE. Duckworth. 2s.

It looks as if popular biography had come to stay. Like everything else nowadays this can plausibly be traced to the growth of democracy. The public has to have heroes. Living heroes, being the servants of popular opinion, are necessarily dull and mediocre; prime ministers and dictators are far too busy to have the exciting private lives which hero-worship demands; cricketers, boxers and airmen tend to find journalism a more profitable occupation than that for which they are fitted; and fiction, for the educated classes, has ceased to be romantic and become trivial. For the educated classes, therefore, the living have been discarded in favour of the dead, and the dull spaces of modern industrial life are peopled with the giants of the past, suitably reduced in dimensions through such means as Messrs. Duckworth's series of succinct two-shilling obituaries.

Of these, Professor MacBride's essay on Huxley is one of the best and most scholarly; all the same, it is doubtful whether Huxley is a very fitting object for this sort of treatment; for one thing, he had an absolutely happy and prolific marriage and his love for his wife 'was perhaps the most ennobling influence in his life'. For another, he was the inventor of agnosticism, a position which cannot equal in appeal either the old-fashioned bravado of atheism or the historic respectability of orthodoxy.

The Spectator,
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In order to be interesting now, a Victorian has to have qualities opposed to those which are thought to be specifically Victorian: Hopkins was a find because he was not recognizably Victorian at all, even Tennyson will do, if he can be shown to be some sort of frustrated pervert and not the arch-Victorian our fathers admired. The chief interest attaching to Huxley, however, is that he is as typically Victorian a giant as one could hope to find; and it is to Professor MacBride's credit that he does not in the least attempt to invest him with any spurious psychological or sexual glamour.

Huxley's career divides itself easily into an early, a mid-, and a late Victorian period: the Huxley of the early period who travelled to South America as a naval surgeon and naturalist on the *Rattlesnake* and went ashore to drink sherry when he ought to have been catching butterflies, is rather attractive, the middle Huxley, married and rising to fame, is less so: he said at this time, 'The more I know intimately of the lives of other men the more obvious it is to me that the wicked does not flourish nor is the righteous punished'. The later Huxley, his scientific integrity undermined by re-

ligious doubts, exhibits the characteristic Victorian mixture of professor and moralist, the one led by the logic of his investigations to a position shocking to the other. One cannot help thinking that it was an immense waste of energy for a man with exceptional scientific gifts to attempt to reconcile himself with a second-rate middle-class conventional orthodoxy with which his conclusions as a biologist had become hopelessly at odds. As Professor MacBride sums up, 'Ethical ideas are absorbed for the most part during childhood and adolescence, which are the most impressionable ages. If, as not infrequently happens, young people pass violently over to complete scepticism in the early twenties, they are unable to free themselves from these ideals, and there results an odd combination of intellectual materialism and evangelical piety in morals such as was exemplified in Huxley himself.' It is perhaps the most monumental attainment of the *vis inertiae* of English conservatism that the nineteenth century should have produced so many men of first-rate ability in their own sphere who were at the same time stuffy and hypocritical moralists.

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Life and Letters

June 1934



The Classical Ballet

A Study by Adrian Stokes

I

THE classical technique may not provide the chief interest in the modern ballet: but the classical technique underlies, and indeed defines, dancing which is ballet dancing. And it follows that anyone who has taken sustenance from the ballet spectacle and, by the same token, cannot stomach the German schools of the 'free' dance, will have interest and reverence at least for the classical technique. Moreover it is probable that the frequenter of the ballet, in the process of becoming an enthusiast, will choose, rather than avoid, the nights on which *Swan Lake* or *Sylphides* or *Casse-Noisette* or *Coppélia* or *Giselle* are performed, the five classical ballets which have been constantly performed in London during the last few years.

The bearing of the classical dancer

is characterized by compactness. The leg muscles are drawn up, the trunk rests upon the legs like a bust upon its base. This bust swivels and bends but in most *adagio* movements at any rate, shoulders remain parallel to the pelvis bone. Every bend, every jump, is accomplished with an effect of ease and of lightness. Perhaps nothing is more typical of the brilliancy of ballet than the manner in which the ballerina turns her head in a pirouette. Her eyes are fixed upon a point in space; as she turns, her head revolves last and comes round first with the eyes fixed on the same point. Thus by the fixed eyes that revolve in a flash back to the same position and fix the audience again, the volition as well as the actuality of speed, accuracy and brilliance is expressed.

The Classical Ballet

The 'turning out' of the classical dancer's feet, legs and thighs, give the broad base-line for jumping and turning and enable a balance that could not otherwise be attained. All the five positions are 'turned out': the second and fifth positions allow the dancer to move sideways easily without turning the torso. 'Turning out' is the essence of ballet and we must pause to examine its aesthetic significance. Ballet is the most 'externalized' form of the dance, an embodiment of the ideals of the European theatre. And this conception can be made more precise by treating it in terms of 'turning out.' For 'turning out' means that the dancer, whatever the convolutions of the dance, continually shows as much of himself as possible to the spectator. When he stands in the first position facing the front we see his feet and his legs in profile. The ballet dancer is, as it were, extended. We realize it best in the *adagio*, a supreme test for the ballerina. When, facing us, she bends forward over her front leg in an *arabesque*, the foot of the raised rear leg is parallel to the floor. A downward pointing foot not only would make an ugly line but would spoil the effect of openness, of disclosure and of that suspension slightly above the ground by which objects are best defined. Again, when the free leg is extended in front and is brought round in a *rond de jambe* to the second position *en haut*, leg and foot are once more turned outwards. The late André Levinson, famous as a ballet critic, had a special affection for this position. It typified for him the openness of the

dance. In all such convolutions of the *adagio* the ballerina is showing the many gradual planes of her body in terms of harmonious lines. While her arms and one leg are extended, her partner turns her slowly round upon the pivot of her straight point. She is shown to the world with the utmost love and grace. She will then integrate herself afresh, raise herself on the points, her arms close to her body in the first position, her feet close together, the one slightly in front of the other. It is the alighting of the insect, the shutting of the wings, the straightening into the perpendicular of feelers and of legs. Soon she will take flight and extend herself again. Meanwhile she shows us on the points what we have not seen in the *arabesque* or *développé*, two unbroken lines from toes to thighs.

Compare this sublime fulfilment, this perfect intercourse expressed in planes, with the progressive spirals of Spanish dancing that betray its oriental ancestry or with the coils of mesmeric tension which the Indian or Javanese dancer builds up and with the same form expends. The uniform outwardness of ballet avoids such alternations. If it is less intense, it is no less profound: for ballet is adjusted to the planes of the stage, composes into a precise picture, a precise sphere of feeling which the imagination grasps entire.

II

As a rule the dances of other civilizations seem to us to express foremost the absorption of strength, the

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building up of a reserve of vitality, a kind of inner re-creation. There are dances that denote the expenditure of energy but one is still conscious that behind the movements of such dances the dancer is drawing to himself the strength of the outside world, appropriating the life of animals or of the fields, or feeding upon a cultural heritage, himself its god. Such dances symbolize an intensification of the human mystery, the wrapt human power of absorption alternating with expenditure. The more typical European forms of the dance are exactly the opposite: they show a dissolution of mystery, they express passion in terms of a uniform corporeal outwardness. The ballerina's body is etherealized. She seems scarcely to rest upon the ground. She is, as it were, suspended just slightly above the earth so that we may see her better. She seems cut off from the sources of her being, or rather, those dark internal sources are shown by her as something light and white, brittle as are all baubles, all playthings that we can utterly examine; yet, at the same time, so perfect is her geometry that we feel this plaything which our minds may utterly possess, to be as well the veriest essence. Her partner guides and holds her. And he – he then watches her *pas* with upraised hand, he shows her off. He has the air of perpetual triumph, and when the time comes for his own *variation* he bounds, leaps, bounces and rejoins the ballerina in the wings amid applause. Such is the abstract of the *pas de deux*, the crux of ballet.

In the *allegro*, ballet dancers move, and they move lightly and fast. Outside of ballet there is no true *allegro* in dancing, no fast movements that are executed with the utmost lightness and ease. All the same, a similar corporeal outwardness, we have said, is characteristic of the more typical European dances. As well as in the stately measures of palaces, ballet has its origin in dances of the people. The English country dances, dances for the village couples (whereas Morris dances, probably of oriental or Moorish ancestry, were performed by a squadron of men), some hundred years after reaching the English court, invaded the continent at the beginning of the eighteenth century. These *contre danses*, as they were called in France, have a good deal to do with the development of ballet. It is probable that they assisted the growth of *allegro*. Certainly, except for the minuet, and for the gavotte which was considered scandalously vivacious when first introduced, slowly-trodden measures began to decline.

But apart from any historical proof, I would claim that ballet is the stylized, cultural form of the European dance (if one may entertain that conception for a moment) because ballet expresses, through the agency of the human body, the same mode of projecting feeling that characterizes all the greatest European visual art. The same fixity without distortion and without sternness, the same outwardness, is the hall-mark of our art, a steady revelation that calls to mind the open face of

The Classical Ballet

the rose or smooth mountains in unbroken sunlight. All art is the conversion of inner states into outward objective form. But whereas the objective form is the constant in art, the degree of outwardness thereby expressed varies a good deal. It is the pleasure of many visual arts to *intimate*, by means of the objective form, an inner state: whereas, in the highest achievements of European visual art, that same inner intensity is entirely transposed into something smooth, gradual yet immediate: time and succession are converted in spatial forms, not merely symbolized by spatial forms. We like to have the mystery cleared, to see our feelings laid out as something concrete and defined. We would win for self-expression the homogeneity and the soft light of stone, stone with its gradual, even-lighted surfaces. Watching the classical ballet I am constantly reminded of Agostino di Duccio's low reliefs in the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini, figures seemingly pressed from the round into relief, preserving many values which could be seen in a statue only if we walked round it. The values of the round are expressed frontally by these gradual surfaces. Like the limbs of the dancer, those of these fifteenth century figures are turned outwards, otherwise no synthesis could have been made of their various facets. And again, as in ballet, none of these forms are abrupt nor contorted. We witness at Rimini the gradual and glowing face of the stone. In ballet the human passions are expressed by the gradual uncontorted curves and straight lines

of the extended human body. There is no residuum, no veil. The human body is purged of atmosphere. All is shown. When the ballerina extends her leg in a *developpé* we contemplate the essence of the European stage, a form of the theatre that is wedded to such display. This exhibition of graduated limbs is an act of virtuosity: for 'turning out' is not 'natural' but is accomplished by the dancer with an air of exuberant ease. Ballet is full of virtuoso effects. The male dancer performing *tours en l'air* is like an animated helicopter. So be it.

III

The character that I have called typical of European visual art and of the European theatre, is, of course, primarily a Mediterranean product which the Renaissance consolidated. For better or for worse modern Europe is the inheritor of the Italian Renaissance. We now know how greatly and how long a typical invention of that time in the visual arts like perspective, can be misused or used meaninglessly. But perspective in the first place was developed by the Renaissance artist to allow him to represent those many facets of the human form and of landscape and to order them in space. It may be objected that subsequent developments in the visual arts of Europe do not emphasize the non-contorted, if virtuoso, outwardness by which I lay so great store. Nevertheless, though it pass from one art to another, somewhere it always exists. There are

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many virtues in Baroque and Rococo architecture but superficially, at any rate, these architectures do not exhibit the extreme spatiality noted above. All the same, it was from the attitudes of seventeenth and eighteenth century deportment that the five positions of ballet dancing were taken. In Rameau's eighteenth-century handbook we may read how to make a bow and why it would be ill-bred to turn in the foot. In making his salutations the eighteenth-century gentleman gracefully showed himself, not only his front, but the sides of his legs and part of the back in the obeisance. He steps forward and he steps backwards, he shows himself in different perspectives. Such were the origins of the classical ballet as we have it to-day. 'When you are able to make a graceful bow,' says Rameau, 'You unconsciously acquire a taste for dancing.'

It may seem that these cultivated artificialities are not a very intense expression. That is true. Nor was there much intensity in ballet before 1780. Ballet is the last integral manifestation of the Renaissance spirit. It needed for its flowering the resurgence of northern romanticism, just as the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century was largely the outcome of Gothic exuberance brought to the South. Probably the earliest signs of the Romantic Movement are to be found in the famous *Lettres sur la danse et les ballets* (1760) by Jean Noverre, celebrated dancer and choregraphist.

But in reading ballet history we are aware that there is hardly a period

in which some daring spirit has not visualized and even attempted to realize a wider scope. Fokine, more than any other of Diaghilev's instruments, created the modern ballet, in which mimed action is no longer the excuse for subsequent dances but is expressed by dancing; and Fokine has many predecessors, not only great reformers like Noverre and Viganó, about whom we can read, but others also in earlier periods about whose work we have but the faintest indications. Noverre did for ballet what his friend Gluck did for opera. Yet over and over again, ballet tends to fall back on the safe position it can hold within opera, as a dancing spectacle thrown in between the acts. Ballet tends to stabilize and conventionalize any new ground that it has attained. Thus the romantic ballet inspired by Taglioni's dancing was soon conventionalized into the spectacle of the classical ballet as we have it to-day, a drama or comedy in which the action is mimed, leading up to brilliant dances of a romantic flavour.

It is perhaps dangerous to generalize on this point. Petipa, the great choregrapher of the Russian Imperial theatres in the second half of the 19th century, varied his methods a good deal. As poetic conceptions some of his ballets are far more intense than others. In most of them there existed the attempt to offer a new atmosphere, a new diversion. At the same time the main object was to provide satisfactory scope for the virtue of the principal dancers whose *variations* were some-

The Classical Ballet

times thrust in without context. For good or for worse, the creative art of choreography has always been inspired and limited by the aptitudes and temperaments of particular dancers. A phenomenon like Nijinsky in his own person inspired a new departure. but then there have been only one Nijinsky and two Vestris.

Music and décor were under the same servitude. But let it not be thought that I decry the classical ballets. I would give anything to see more of them. Yet I am not one of those who maintain that this, the true classical ballet, the ballet in which we see the classical *pas* performed for their own sake, innocent for the most part of any vital context, should never have been touched. Lovers of ballet will always want to see classical ballet, to see the classical *pas*, the framework of ballets, in all their purity. This will be perhaps their greatest joy. Certainly *Casse-Noisette* draws me to the theatre as insistently as do *Jeux d'Enfants* or *Cotillon*, if not more insistently. But if I had not seen *Jeux d'Enfants* nor *Cotillon* nor other modern ballets, I doubt whether *Casse-Noisette* would have drawn me at all. Unless I had seen how the modern ballet can create an entirely contemporary content, an art-form in which composer and painter combine with choreographer to interpret the contemporary scene or interpret other periods in the contemporary manner, if ballet had not provided my imagination with contents that I can carry on the buses and down the tubes, then I doubt somewhat whether, except

for certain Italian studies, I should ever have seen the 'point' of the classical ballet. My interest might have been partially waylaid by a seeming anachronism in the treatment of the love relation, for instance. I would not have seen classical ballet as the living source of modern ballet but as a decaying art that cannot be developed. The geometry of the classical ballet, the outwardness of the classical ballet and the harmonious gradualness of its forms, are an emblem of the European spirit: they will always have relevance, but it is greatly increased if other ballets are brought in closer relation with contemporary life. When we are satisfied that the dance can interpret a modern content, then we can watch with the greatest keenness the purely abstract ballet, the ballet which is, or seems at first to be, a mere excuse for the display of classical virtuosity. We soon realize, however, that these ballets too (for it is the best that have survived) provide food enough for the imagination.

After witnessing the concentrated conception of a Diaghilev ballet expressed by dancing, music and décor, it is a particular pleasure to see a classical ballet in which pure dancing, the occasion for these other activities, is glorified. There exists a poignancy, too, in the very alternation of mime and dance, it is a pleasure to see dancing seize its delicate excuses, it is a pleasure to be transported into a world in which every situation attends the commentary of combined movement.

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IV

I write for my own generation, for those, like myself, whose first real introduction to ballet was through the later Diaghilev or through Massine. I did not love the classical ballet at first. But the fact that the much criticized ballets of Diaghilev's later period which some critics have stigmatized as a betrayal of the classical technique and of the ballet spirit, the fact that these later ballets, a ballet like Cocteau-Picasso-Satie's *Parade* for instance, should have in my case and in the case of others stimulated an appetite for classical ballets, is itself a sufficient answer to those critics. We would never have known how consummate was this art had not Diaghilev provided us with a feast of music, painting and wit as well as of dancing pure and simple. We would never have realized the scope of this art.

There is now in London a large and enthusiastic ballet audience. It was created by Diaghilev himself or by the esteem which, since his death, ballet still holds. This audience would not enjoy classical ballet as they do had they not been introduced to it via the modern ballet or the prestige which Diaghilev gave it. Pavlova's company, it is true, never departed far from classical ballet. The public at large however, went to see Pavlova, not her ballets. But whatever Diaghilev put on the stage heightened our awareness of ballet in general. First of all there was Fokine who re-created in his ballets

and concentrated the classical *pas*, harnessed them to a direct expressiveness hitherto reserved for mime.

All the same the Fokine ballets and the ballets of Diaghilev's later periods as well, were, in a sense, a diffusion of pure dancing, a diffusion that embraced the painters, particularly the great Bakst, and the composers. Both in the choreography and in these other arts the classical ballet with its abstract, self-contained dances, was harnessed to a wider expressiveness. It was in terms of this wider expressiveness that a contemporary content could be treated: and it was because of the power exhibited by this wider expressiveness that we learned to love its source, the classical ballet. Diaghilev, not Pavlova, taught us to love classical ballet, to appreciate fully Pavlova herself.

And then there was Stravinsky. *Oiseau de feu!* What can we conceive to provide a more comprehensive image of the ballet, the classical ballet! Five* bird-like movements (the *pointe* is like the tip of a wing) are in combination an extract of the ballet soul: it was in the music, in the décor as well. Then *Petrouchka*, the animated marionette, not the object of farce as in *Coppélia*, but the figure of a great and profound tragedy. The music is a masterpiece. Some critics have complained that the music overwhelms the dancing. There are ballet purists who always would have music subservient to dancing, commissioned to supply a very definite role as a mere accompaniment to the dance. These purists have much

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in common with Mary Wigmann. There is room in ballet for every kind of relationship between music and dancing: the one kind enhances the others, just as the modern and classical ballets enhance one another. A well-devised ballet programme to-day gives us at least three varieties of this relationship: and that variety is part and parcel of our pleasure.

In *Schéhrazade* and *Sacre du Printemps*, Diaghilev showed that symphonic music itself could be employed for ballet. There was no moonlight in the later ballets. A lyrical content was preserved with the help of the wry yet exuberant tricks of the music of *Les Six*. In *Les Matelots* for instance, a ballet which has suffered so many unfortunate imitations at the hands of English choregraphists, the more lyrical passages are entrusted to the wheezings of the trombone: but remember that the stage above is full of sunlight. This music and Massine's choregraphy provided that element of toughness, of wryness, necessary as fibre to the modern lyrical mood, a plant that extracts a soft brilliance from the glare and brass of full daylight.

In Massine's and Balanchine's ballets the classical *pas* are sometimes used, less to interpret a general idea as in Fokine's work, more to express character or situation. It is a half-ironic use of classical *pas* which yet retain the loveliness of their emblematic geometry. This characterization, in really good ballets, is swift and witty, profound, memorable. It is not a travesty so long as even the simplest

classical *pas* are used to delineate a situation expressively. In *The Good-humoured Ladies*, one of Massine's earliest works, the ladies course round the stage with *grands jetés*, thus expressing their confusion, their sense of imbroglio. Lifar's characteristic *variation* in *Les Matelots* (Lifar's part was taken by Lichine in the 1933 season) was at root a classical dance. In *La Pastorale*, the tall Doubrovskaya as the queen of film stars used to pass her developpés over the head of her cavalier. That was a witty and memorable movement, a disdainful adjustment of a classical *pas* to current vulgarity, a complete expression of Hollywood situations in terms of ballet. By itself such a movement might seem a travesty of ballet; but the serious beauty of dancing and of the classically trained dancers, the beauty and brilliance of the décor and much of the music, existed as well in these ballets. It was ballet, the ballet style. And then, perhaps, after the interval we were treated to *Swan Lake* or to *Sylphides*. We enjoyed each of them, *Matelots* and *Swan Lake*, to the full, and each of them partly because of the other. They were entirely different variations upon the same theme; and we realized how fruitful, how vital was that theme, the ballet style. Thus Diaghilev could employ ballet to realize the most improbable conception: there was so much glory behind him. At the same time the purists grumbled. Still, Levinson admitted that the 1925 season was saved because in the midst of these innovations Diaghilev recalled Maestro Gecchetti, most famous of teachers, and

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put him again in charge of the troupe. The dancers performed their classical exercises each day with renewed vigour. 'Diaghilev makes pebbles with gold' Levinson complained after watching *Les Biches* or some such ballet. And if Diaghilev did so, what a relief it was, what a proof of omnipotence, since everyone except the very best artists are always trying to make gold with pebbles. (Though to attempt to make gold into pebbles is a preferable activity in my view than the one of those London choregraphists who, mistakenly endeavouring to emulate this period of Diaghilev's ballets, imagine that they contrive art in their making of pebbles from pebbles.)

There is something hellenic about the classical ballet, all the more noticeable seeing that it is the form imposed upon a northern romanticism. This hellenism is deeply founded, and therefore entirely unlike the superficial hellenism of Isadora Duncan's dancing. Ballet tends to revert to the treatment of classical subjects with which it started. The open, *physical* and graceful attitudes of the marble Greek gods, in whom emotion is shown as an outward-turned body, was dramatized by the classical technique. One witnesses in ballet the release of power, not its integration, just as in the eighteenth century a man introduced himself, showed himself, by turning his feet outwards and by the wide sweep of his arm and by the slow inclination of his body. But the classical ballet as we know it to-day, the ballet in which the classical technique, and particularly

the *allegro* which is so lacking in other forms of the dance, was developed to its uttermost, dates from the Romantic Age.

La Sylphide, a ballet which provided Taglioni with her most famous part, was first produced in 1832. Tights had been adopted some thirty or forty years before, freeing the dancers' legs for leaps. About the same time the power to turn out the feet and the whole leg up to the thigh at an angle of ninety degrees became *de rigueur*. Before 1780 or so dancers had been content to turn out at an angle of forty-five degrees only. (They were content also with raising their legs at no more than an angle of forty-five degrees. Indeed, it is doubtful whether Carmargo found it necessary to wear knickers when dancing. By 1800, dancers raised their legs ninety degrees for a movement such as the *developpé*.) The successes of Carmargo, however, have been attributed to the fact that she was exceptionally well 'turned out' for that period. Early in the nineteenth century, dancing on points was introduced.

Marie Taglioni was, so to speak, the product of the same line of thought as had produced these developments, just as Liszt, the unrivalled pianist, was the product of the age which perfected the piano and produced the quintessential piano music. *La Sylphide* was both the first Romantic ballet and the first ballet in which the full classical technique was exploited as we know it to-day. The romantic ballet is the classical ballet, we have said.

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'Another point of interest concerning the ballet' (*La Sylphide*) writes Mr. Beaumont in his *A Short History of Ballet*, 'is that the white muslin costume designed by Eugene Lami for Mlle. Taglioni – tight fitting bodice leaving the neck and shoulders bare, bell-shaped skirt reaching midway between the knee and the ankle, pale pink tights and satin shoes – became the accepted uniform for the dancer of the pure classical ballet.' This is the *ballet blanc* of white tights and white ballet skirts, indicating to some people a rather faded mythology, especially if they have never seen a proper ballet but only some of the semi-ballet interludes of pantomime or of music hall. This mythology, in classical ballet at any rate, will not seem faded to those who come to it from the modern ballet, for the latter will have taught them to appreciate the ageless and always emblematic qualities of ballet's geometry, seen at its purest when performed in the classical costume.

V

Amid the glories of the Russian Imperial schools, amid the snows of the North, served by the tumultuous glint of Russian art, the classical ballet reached its height. Would that we might see the three acts of *Swan Lake* instead of a one-act resumé! Petipa, a Marseillais by birth, who in his early days danced in Paris with Carlotta Grisi, the original Giselle, and with Fanny Ellsler, was the choregraphist-in-

chief of this great period in Russia during the last half of the nineteenth century. According to Levinson, however, it is an entire mistake to attribute *Swan Lake* to Petipa, as the programmes always do, at any rate that part of the ballet which we are accustomed to see. The choregraphist was Petipa's understudy, Ivanov, who was responsible also for *Casse-Noisette*.

I have stated that in classical ballet the music was composed to order at the precise directions of the choregraphist. This is not necessarily anything against it as music. The requirements of particular dances have inspired the best composers at all periods. In the early days there were the galliards, pavannes, voltas, courantes, canaries, allemandes, gavottes, bourrées, passepieds, rigaudons, passecailles and sarabandes. Indeed, these court measures provided forms for a considerable part of seventeenth and eighteenth century music. Handel and Gluck wrote gavottes and sarabandes as songs in their operas. The minuet which Haydn and Mozart introduced as the third movement of a symphony, was a dance invented by Beauchamps, Louis XIV'S ballet master and the original formulator of the five positions. He is believed to have evolved the minuet from a folk dance from Poitou.

An interesting treatise might be written on the influence of European dancing upon European music. Early nineteenth-century music in particular reflects the vast influence of national and peasant dances, and it was at this time too that the waltz spread like fire.

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The waltz obtains an apotheosis in ballet. All these dances and the music they inspired added greatly to the variety of the ballet spectacle. For side by side with the dances evolved out of the classical exercises, the intrinsic ballet so to say, there has always existed in classical ballet many popular dances which could be added at will and which, in varying degrees, were translated into terms of the ballet technique. Popular and folk dances, especially since the time of Taglioni, have often served as the themes of ballets. Upon such a theme, as upon its own intrinsic movements, classical ballet builds an architecture that closely resembles the structure of a symphony. Modern ballet is built up in a similar way. One of the great pleasures of a good ballet is therein to witness symphonic structure as something plastic.

Some popular steps like the ancient *pas de basque* belong to the intrinsic ballet. One cannot make any absolute distinction since nearly all the movements of classical ballet may be derived from some popular or court dance, two categories which are interrelated in their turn. No definition of a living art can be absolute. The obvious importation, however, is generally called a 'character' dance in classical ballet; such, for instance, are the frequent Spanish, Hungarian, Polish and Russian dances. For these dances, though they be reduced to terms of the stage, still retain their national style. The waltz, on the other hand, which upon its first inception from the Bavarian *landler*, grew rapidly into a

cosmopolitan dance, has become part and parcel of ballet. (Sometimes the *variations* in a ballet take their names from the music alone. Thus the naming of the Waltz and of the Mazurka in *Sylphides* refer solely to Chopin's music and not to the dances set to this music.)

Even the French classical romantic ballet, like the earlier theatre ballet and like the court ballet that preceded it, was largely composed of 'character' dances. Moresque or grotesque dances, too, have existed in ballet since the earliest days, since the seventeenth century masques and the earlier Italian *intermedi*.

And so, when all is said and done, it is impossible to isolate the 'intrinsic classical ballet'. Yet the great style itself which orders each assimilation is immediately recognizable, and we find it just as much in those modern ballets which, from the old point of view, are composed very largely of 'character' dances. We possess a great definition of this style in the ballet music of Tchaikowsky, a definition that can never be obscured. If music owes a great deal to dancing, the ballet style itself, the style of an evanescent art, owes its one and only permanent consolidation to Tchaikowsky, composer of the scores for *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Princess* and *Casse-Noisette*. A Tchaikowsky ballet is ballet twice over, ballet redoubled. For this music, apart from its context, that is to say, apart from any particular dance upon which Petipa or Ivanov had decided, is always impregnated by the spirit of the classical dance in general.

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If you prod a piece of liver preparatory to cooking, it seems to bite back on the fork with a curious stringy bite. I can think of no sensation more different than the one Tchaikowsky's ballet music inspires. It is something white, firm yet crisp, which you cannot prod with the mind. It contains a white or silvery langour, a vast silvery thunder, stage thunder perhaps, though not the stage thunder of tea trays but of the Czar's packed sideboards of silver. *Ballon* is for ever enshrined in this music, so are the ephemeral, cygnet dart-points of the *fouettés* in the *pas de quatre* of *Swan Lake*, and a host of other movements. A Tchaikowsky waltz emits that glaucous brilliance by which this dance is glorified in ballet. There is something almost terrible in the climax of such music. But watch the stage: dancers never totter: at this moment they are more superb than ever: the final note reveals an attitude, a universal precision, a closure of virtuosity that is itself an acclamation.

With what fierce springs this music unwinds itself, how superbly it dawdles and fondles the *adagio* of the *pas de deux*, how brisk yet tender are the variations and overwhelming to all but the dancers are the *coda* and the *presto*! This music of the severely classical dance is itself a modern ballet: for just as in modern ballet everyday movements are englamoured, defined

by Synchronization as well, so in the ballet music of Tchaikowsky the very noises of the streets, the very tooting of horns, every noise and music that stumbles, is raised to the crystal pitch of the *ballet blanc*, translucent and transparent, clear yet refractive

The *ballet blanc* of Tchaikowsky! As I write I see the *corps de ballet* of *Casse-Noisette* in steel-blue ballet skirts amid a snow ten times more profuse than the fall *Petrouchka* can command. They are waving branched sticks with baubles at their ends. This *corps de ballet* is the snow itself which Clara must traverse with the nut-cracker before she can gain the kingdom of the Sugar Plum fairy. The light, silent yet careering flakes spread and mass with a continuity unusual in ballet, and therefore insistent, running to the stiff notes of wood-wind and brass: then, at the conclusion of this exhausting dance, the *corps de ballet* stand or lie piled up, waving still their white brilliant blobs as the curtain descends and rises and descends.

One has watched at twilight an almost invisible and ghostly winter's rain become illumined and compact. The rain had turned to snow. Flakes whirled and then fell slowly, for they were light.

Ballet etherializes movement: the undulations, never tortuous, are those of snow or the swan's white neck.

Ashes to Ashes

A Palace Epilogue

by Laurence Housman

Curtained daylight filters into the richly-furnished apartment, in which sit two very distinguished Ladies, whose comely faces are now mellowed with age. They both have what its devotees love to describe as 'the Royal Manner'. Constantly accustomed to be received with studied deference, and to be more bowed to than bowing, they accept the situation of a lifetime with quiet dignity – almost with nonchalance. But though not self-conscious about it, they would be very conscious were it ever withdrawn. It never is. At this very moment, a Lady-in-waiting receives with a curtsy, from the younger of the distinguished Pair, a key, with which she proceeds to unlock the glass doors of a book-case that stands by itself in a place of honour. The book-case contains some sixty or seventy volumes, all bound alike in scarlet leather, adorned with the Royal Crown, and the Royal Arms. Into it she puts back one volume, and gets out another. This she brings and presents, together with the key, to the younger of the two Ladies, whose orders she is obeying.

1ST LADY Thank you. That will do.

(The Attendant Lady, understanding that her services are no longer required, curtsies, and withdraws. The two Ladies

are now alone. The Elder, seated in an armchair beside the fire, is reading some large sheets of MS. The other, seated at a table strewn with papers and writing material, watches her with attention. Presently the reader lays down the MS. upon her lap, and sits thinking; then, with a slight gesture of assent, hands it back)

1ST LADY You think *that* should go?

2ND LADY (*slowly*) I think so . . . Yes . . . I'm sorry, though.

1ST LADY So am I. It hurts *me*, far more than anyone else, to destroy anything that *she* wrote, poor Darling!

2ND LADY But some things – like that – she wrote only for herself to read.

1ST LADY That's what *I* say! Over anything about which one can have the slightest doubt, I am willing to consult others. But when I am quite sure, then I decide for myself . . . That goes, then. So that finishes number ten.

(She adds the sheets to a pile that is already waiting, and touches a hand-bell. The Attendant Lady re-enters)

Ashes to Ashes

Miss Bertram, will you put those into the fire, please?

(Miss Bertram goes with them into the adjoining room, but does not close the door. Her Royal Mistress follows as far as the doorway, and stands watching her)

2ND LADY *(in a horrified whisper)* Surely you don't have to *watch* her doing it?

1ST LADY *(with lowered voice)* One can't be too careful. *(Then, having satisfied herself that the fire has received its prey, she closes the door, and returns to her seat)* Some of the pages I don't let go out of my own hands. I burn them myself, for fear that one single *word* might be seen.

2ND LADY But surely you don't mean that Mamma ever wrote down bad words that shouldn't be read?

1ST LADY No, my dear, never. But bad *things* – things that, for over sixty years, went on happening in the Family – and of which I myself had no idea! Nor had anybody. She kept them all to herself.

2ND LADY She was wonderful, wasn't she?

1ST LADY She was. Before the end she had a hundred and eighty-nine living descendants; and she knew everything about all of them.

2ND LADY *(meaningly)* Not quite, my dear!

1ST LADY Almost. I feel now as if I did! It has been an ageing experience, I can tell you! Can't you see how it *has* aged me?

2ND LADY I've no doubt you must have found it rather trying.

1ST LADY Not so 'trying' as the Family has been – *trying* to interfere. When that began, I decided, for a whole month, not to see anybody. I even went away, and wouldn't say where I was going. But they found me out. It's my belief they put detectives on to me!

2ND LADY Oh, my dear; nonsense!

1ST LADY Well, I didn't get one week to myself before they were after me again.

2ND LADY Did you take all the Diaries with you?

1ST LADY All? Look at them! No: only three. And that was work enough for a whole month, I can assure you. They were about the time when Bertie was eighteen, and beginning to give trouble.

(A sympathetic sigh comes from the armchair)

Well, all *that's* gone!

2ND LADY Quite right!

1ST LADY Oh? I'm glad to have *somebody* on my side – about *that*, at any rate.

2ND LADY *(luxuriating in the large allowance made by family affection)* Poor, dear Bertie! I don't think either of them quite understood him: especially not just then.

(Meanwhile Miss Bertram has returned, and while the Elder Lady is still speaking, has murmured to her Mistress news of an arrival. We catch the words 'His Royal Highness', but we miss the name that follows.)

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1ST LADY Oh, I really don't think I can see him! Say I'm engaged.

MISS BERTRAM If Your Royal Highness found yourself too much engaged to see him, His Royal Highness said I was to give this letter.

1ST LADY (*looking at the letter before opening it*) Oh, my dear, *He's* writing to me again!

2ND LADY He? Who?

(Before the question can be answered, the door opens and in walks, unannounced a young man whose pleasant countenance has been made sufficiently familiar in the public press – though it may not be the one with which we are most familiar. His manner is genial and confident – the better, perhaps to hide a doubt as to what sort of reception he is going to get.

H. R. H. Hullo. Two Aunts? I thought I should only find one.

1ST LADY (*accepting the kiss, but not returning it*) My dear Boy, I hadn't said I could see you.

H. R. H. No, you were going to say you couldn't. So I thought I had better bring myself in, without waiting. You see, I'm here by command, this time; (*he points to the letter in her hand*), so you can't get out of it.

(Then, while she opens the letter, he goes to his other Aunt, and kissing her says jocosely:

H. R. H. What? Royal Aunt: You staying here?

2ND LADY No; only for the day, my dear. How's your father?

H. R. H. Oh, bearing up. He's been shooting again.

2ND LADY I'm glad to hear it.

1ST LADY (*putting aside the letter which she has now read*) Did he have a good day? Where was it? A large party?

H. R. H. Now don't you try putting me off! It wasn't *that* I came about. (*Then, sighting the volume, and the other things pertaining thereto, lying on the table*) Hullo! Death and destruction still going forward?

1ST LADY 'Preservation' I should call it. You would too, if you knew how many of the Family reputations I've saved already.

H. R. H. Living, or dead?

1ST LADY Both.

H. R. H. Well, as you know, we all agree to a time-limit. But State-archives don't have to be opened for fifty – or even a hundred years, if you don't wish them to be. And that's what we all want you to do. Seal them up, but don't burn them!

1ST LADY And in fifty or a hundred years, who will there be left that loved her, or cared for any of us? For all we know, a Socialist Government may then be in power – only too glad to do as they did in Russia – publish everything they could get hold of.

H. R. H. Still, we do belong to History, don't we? Royal Family affairs can't be kept private for ever like other people's. Look at all the pow-wow still going on over Queen Elizabeth and Mary Stuart, and their love affairs. And wouldn't we like to know the whole truth about them?

1ST LADY Your Great-Grandmamma

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didn't have any love affairs, – except the one that everyone knows, and honours.

H. R. H. No; but some of the others did.

1ST LADY I'm quite aware of that!

H. R. H. Well, were any of us worse than Charles the Second?

1ST LADY All that has been discussed already. Why re-open it?

H. R. H. No one wants to, if you'd only have the whole thing sealed up till it doesn't matter to anybody.

1ST LADY In my opinion, it will always matter.

H. R. H. As it's a Family affair. Why not give other opinions a look in?

1ST LADY I have given them 'a look in', as you call it. Nearly all the things which I thought ought to go, I first submitted to those whom they most concerned.

H. R. H. Yes, that was clever of you. Of course everybody voted against what they didn't want passed on about themselves. But they wouldn't have been so particular about each other – not all of them. If you'd asked Uncle. . . .

1ST LADY I don't want to hear any names, please!

H. R. H. Well, spread it, then! Grand-papa so-and-so wasn't particularly fond of nephew so-and-so whom we have ceased to know publicly – though some of you still write to him privately I'm told, I'm sure G. P. wouldn't have minded anything that came out about *him* – or about *himself* either, I believe.

1ST LADY I'm not so sure.

H. R. H. If you aren't, give posterity the benefit of your doubt.

1ST LADY It would be no benefit to anyone.

H. R. H. Only to history.

1ST LADY There are some things that history had much better not know.

H. R. H. For a time; not for always.

1ST LADY Bad things don't improve with keeping.

H. R. H. They do, in a way. King John makes quite good history; but he must have been a holy terror to live with. And wouldn't you want us to know about his having Prince Arthur's eyes put out?

2ND LADY He didn't.

H. R. H. Oh? No; but he wanted to. And now here are you (*to* 1ST LADY) doing the same thing on a bigger scale – putting everybody's eyes out. They're not to see; they're not to know.

1ST LADY. Not what doesn't concern them.

H. R. H. I wish there were something about *me*: I shouldn't mind!

1ST LADY You weren't born, my dear.

H. R. H. Yes, I was – just.

1ST LADY Oh, yes; she saw you once, I think, and kissed you. And that's about all.

H. R. H. Quite enough: make me a link in history. Please don't leave that out!

1ST LADY I think, my dear, you'd better go. You are only interrupting and hindering me.

H. R. H. There's that letter to be answered. I'll go, if you'll send word that you'll stop it.

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1ST LADY (*with severity*) Mind your own business, my dear!

H. R. H. But, you know, everybody's awfully upset at what you are doing. None of the family liked it.

1ST LADY They've all taken very good care to let me know *that* already.

H. R. H. Well, doesn't it count?

1ST LADY It makes the doing of a duty more unpleasant. But I shall go on doing it.

H. R. H. Well, but father *does* count for a bit, doesn't he? I know you think I haven't any sense; but *he* has; and so has mother.

1ST LADY And haven't *I* got sense, pray?

H. R. H. Yes – usually.

1ST LADY Oh? So, on this occasion, my senses have left me?

H. R. H. I don't think you quite realize the importance of what you are doing, with all the Family against you.

1ST LADY Don't you? On the contrary, I consider this the most important thing I have ever had to do in my life. In fact, the more I have gone into it, the more I feel that I was the only person who *could* do it.

H. R. H. Who *would* do it.

1ST LADY Perhaps so. In that case, all the better. If no one else has the courage and the sense to do it – *I* have. Having been with your Great Grand-mamma so long, I knew her much better than others; so I think I also know better what she would wish. And – as a proof of it – she left these Diaries to *me*.

H. R. H. But she didn't leave them to

you to destroy. If she meant that, she'd have said so, or done it herself.

1ST LADY She left them to me *absolutely*; so I have a right to use my own discretion about them. And I am not 'destroying' them; I am only cutting out things which I am quite sure she would not wish anyone else to know; and which – had she not known they would be kept private – she would never have written.

H. R. H. But they can be kept private without your cutting them about. If there are any things you don't want known *now*, don't cut them out – paste them up; or have them put under lock-and-key for a hundred years. It wouldn't matter then.

1ST LADY It would, I assure you!

H. R. H. Oh it would, would it? Then it would make history: that just proves it!

1ST LADY History can do quite well without it. There are some things which it's much better for nobody to know anything about.

H. R. H. But *you* know them.

1ST LADY Yes; I had to.

H. R. H. Well, have they done you any harm?

1ST LADY I would very much rather not have known some of them: often they have very much shocked and distressed me.

H. R. H. You can't be sure that some one else doesn't know. A lot of extracts were taken from those Diaries before you ever got hold of them.

1ST LADY Possibly; but when I have done what I am now doing, there will no longer be any proof that they are true.

Ashes to Ashes

H. R. H. That won't prevent people from believing that they *are* true.

1ST LADY That I can't help.

H. R. H. I wonder what sort of things you are cutting out?

1ST LADY I daresay you do.

H. R. H. Probably a lot of things that you think shocking are only funny. There's that story about little 'Original Sin', when he first came to see her. Have you cut that out?

1ST LADY What story?

H. R. H. About his getting under the table, and taking all his things off.

1ST LADY I have kept most of it, but not all.

H. R. H. Whatever did you have to leave out?

1ST LADY Well, as I happen to have it here, I'll tell you . . . (*She turns over some loose sheets*) This is how that particular 'story' as you call it, goes on. (*She begins reading*) 'He danced about, not a bit ashamed of himself – such a little darling, so pink and pretty; I picked him up, and kissed him all over. Most amusing!'

H. R. H. Well?

1ST LADY Well, a thing like that ought never to get known. Most improper!

H. R. H. But, beloved Aunt, he was only five years old!

1ST LADY At five years old, he was *very much himself*. And after all that has happened since, I'm quite sure English people wouldn't like it.

H. R. H. There are lots of things she did they don't *like* – now they know about them; The way she treated old Gladstone for one. She didn't kiss him that way!

1ST LADY Don't be indecent!

H. R. H. Now there you are! Saying that sort of thing *used* to be indecent – but it isn't indecent now. Ideas have changed.

1ST LADY *Mine haven't.*

H. R. H. No; yours haven't. That's just it. And what right have you to impose your ideas upon history?

1ST LADY As much as anybody. Your Grandmamma imposed *her* ideas upon history for over fifty years. If she did, why may not I?

H. R. H. Well, she happened to be Queen, you know. Her ideas couldn't help counting – a bit.

1ST LADY And mine are not to? I think everybody has a right to make their ideas 'count', as you call it – as much as they possibly can – if they believe them to be right.

H. R. H. No use, if they don't last. All ideas have to change. The Great-Gran thought votes for women outrageous and disgraceful.

1ST LADY So they were, and are!

H. R. H. So that's your mind still, is it? And on that sort of basis you are destroying historical documents. I wish I were a cat-burglar!

1ST LADY Keep wishing if it does you any good, my dear! But please don't go on wasting *my* time. I'm busy. I've only got your Aunt with me for the day; and we have a lot to go through together.

H. R. H. Father won't be pleased with you, Auntie.

1ST LADY Pleasing your Father is not my first consideration. And don't call me 'Auntie'; it's vulgar! My object

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and duty is to please 'Great-Gran', as you call her.

H. R. H. Well, I hope you do; but I doubt it. She was a wonder! *She* wanted to publish a lot more of her Diaries than you do. And it took an archbishop to stop her.

1ST LADY No archbishop is going to stop *me*. I am only doing what my conscience tells me is right. If I have erred at all, it is in keeping not too little, but too much. I may tell you that I have left in a great deal that, for myself, I should prefer to leave out. But when those who were most concerned didn't mind, or even wished it to be left, then I let others decide. But there were *some* things about your father that I didn't even show him.

H. R. H. He'd be sorry if he knew.

1ST LADY He would!

H. R. H. That you'd suppressed them, I mean . . . Anyway, some things – true or not, I don't know – but they read true – have got out already. I don't mean about him; but they are in a book, just published. And it's *said* that they came out of the Diaries.

1ST LADY If they did they are a breach of copyright.

H. R. H. But you can't prosecute for it without admitting that they are true.

Better say it's all a lie, if it's the truth you are afraid of.

1ST LADY I'm afraid we don't see what you call 'truth' in the same light. The truth can be indecent, *and* disrespectful, and irreverent, especially when it is told about Royalty. And I consider it my duty – over truths of *that* kind – to take care that they don't go any farther than I can help. Now it's no use arguing any more. Tell your father I will write to him.

H. R. H. Well, Royal Ma'am, I've said all I could; and I've represented the family to the best of my ability. But if you know so much better than everybody, it's no use my saying anything more. Good-bye, and perhaps you'd better not kiss me. We aren't pleased with each other. - (*Then to the other Lady*) And what about you, Auntie?

2ND LADY You can kiss me if you like, my dear; but I'm not sure that your Aunt isn't right.

(And so, having failed in his errand, H. R. H. retires. As the door closes behind him, the 1ST LADY rings the hand-bell. The Attendant Lady enters)

1ST LADY (*producing the key*) Miss Bertram, please to bring me Volume Twelve.

The Emotions and Mr. Huxley

by G. M. Young

I

WRITING in the April number of *LIFE AND LETTERS*, Mr. Aldous Huxley delivered a trenchant and provocative pronouncement on the emotional causes of war. The exordium is arresting.

'To understand European politics, one should read the history of Central America. This is not paradox but scientific method. It is by studying the simple that we learn to understand the more complex phenomena of the same kind. The behaviour of children and lunatics throws light on the more complex behaviour of adults and the sane.'

Science moves so fast that it is difficult to keep pace. But I had always been given to understand that lessons from the simple and morbid states of an organism could only be applied to complex and healthy states so far as they were applicable, and that to determine the range and degree of their applicability was one of the most difficult and delicate of scientific proceedings. I remember that a doctor of the last generation declared that Blake ought to be regarded simply as a subject for the alienist. I have no doubt that if

half a dozen lunatics, all of whom had produced designs as good as *Job*, and written poems as good as *Night*, were brought together and examined by a specialist capable of appreciating both, his observations would be highly instructive. But the happy combination seems unlikely to be realized.

I am not quite sure whether in Mr. Huxley's method the Central American Republics stand for lunatics or children. But his exposition of their political history discloses a fundamental lack of analogy with any state system in the world but one, and there the analogy breaks down. I tried the Swiss Cantons, the Balkans, the Succession States, the Baltic States and the Low Countries in turn. All presented characteristics which forbade me to apply the lessons of Central America to their history. Then I thought of New England. The Central American States released from Spanish sovereignty broke up. But the Thirteen Colonies released from English sovereignty held together. Why therefore of two parallel cases, neither presenting any special resemblance to European conditions, we ought to study one rather than the

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other, I do not clearly see. But it has more than once of late passed through my mind that what the world most needs in our day is a course in Formal Logic. It could be made very amusing: it would be a popular turn on the Wireless: and it might suggest to pacifists that if War is to be regarded as an Illicit Process of the Major, their own attitude is at times not altogether unaffected by that painful condition known as the Undistributed Middle.

II

It is not part of Mr. Huxley's scientific method to use terms with precision. Lust, for example, which occurs eight times in one column, is sometimes used in the philosophic sense of sensual appetite, sometimes it means sexual appetite illicitly indulged, and what it means in the collocation *lust for sociability* I do not know. But I am reminded of a wise saying of Mr. Chesterton's that you may sometimes see fifteen factory girls getting into one railway carriage but never fifteen philanthropists. I suppose they stand on the platform hissing 'Lust!' In particular, though Mr. Huxley's principal theme is an analysis of Nationalism in the light of the Orgy, he does not appear to me to have framed for himself any clear conception of either, reaching further than the proposition that, like Jonah with the gourd, he does well to be angry about them, even unto the death.

An orgy may be defined as any collective activity, recurring at inter-

vals, and substituting for the routine of labour a concentrated irresponsibility. In the orgy, the community gives itself up, as we say, to fun or sorrow or drink or worship or, indeed, to any emotion which it is capable of feeling. Historically, the Greater Orgies correspond with certain natural punctuations in the rhythm of the world and of social life: the harvest is crowned with a feast, the bumping race with a bump supper. The Lesser Orgies – new moons or sabbaths, saints' days and market dinners, are like commas in the text of life. Our own national habits reproduce with curious fidelity the orgiastic rhythm of primitive existence. The great occasions are the Spring Holiday, the Summer Holiday, the Winter Holiday: the minor punctuation is furnished by the weekend. Sociologists will agree that few reforms did so much to raise the general tone of national life in the nineteenth century as the re-establishment of the seven-day rhythm which followed on the introduction of the Saturday half-holiday in the 'fifties; and writing on May Day, I cannot rage as fiercely as perhaps I ought over the fact that at Whitsuntide 100,000 new cars will be shooting the lower middle classes, their loves and their litter, over every down and forest glade.

*Cras amorum copulatrix inter umbras
arborum!*

'Bawling in mobs,' Mr. Huxley remarks, 'is almost as good as copulation.' I think there is some exaggeration here. True, *mille modi veneris*, but

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in rating the pleasures of bawling so high, Mr. Huxley seems to me, like the Frenchman in the story, to have forgotten the ordinary mode. That the orgy has its specific pleasure as such, unaffected by its actual content or occasion, is of course admitted. I have spoken of concentrated irresponsibility, and the orgy, to yield its full effect, must have a shape, and will usually develop a ritual, of its own. An anthropologist might be puzzled to determine why Cup Tie crowds sing 'Abide with me' while waiting for the King to appear; that they should sing something is almost inevitable. But I doubt whether the orgy can ever be induced. It must arise out of something which the community feels, persistently if unconsciously, all along, and weeping in mobs, whether or not it is as good as copulation, is at its appropriate time quite as satisfying as bawling.

Intrusive on the main orgiastic rhythms are those intermittent occurrences which in other respects appear to share the nature of the punctual orgy. The occasion may vary indefinitely. A religious revival affords the most obvious example, but in essential quality there is nothing I think to distinguish a revival from such a communal manifestation as the mourning for Princess Charlotte in 1820 or for Dickens in 1870. A certain concern, to use the neutral Quaker term, over the death of an attractive or interesting person is natural to all of us; celebrity creates an ideal propinquity; and national sorrow has the concentration and surrender which seem to me the true orgiastic

qualities. Indeed these moments of concentration may occur even in the most ordinary and current business of life. I once heard from an engineer of such an occasion in a Clydeside shop. A submarine had sunk on her trials: the crew were heard tapping, and orders were sent for new lifting gear to be got ready. 'The men dropped at the bench, and the relief men hauled them away and stepped into their places.' In the fury and collapse of such a scene there is nothing fundamentally different from the rapture and exhaustion of the Maenad

III

'Jesus,' Mr. Huxley remarks, 'lays no stress on [the orgiastic feelings] nor prescribes any technique for arousing them. For him, it is clear, the surgical stimulation of deliberately induced ecstasy, of luscious ritual and corybantic revivalism were all entirely unnecessary. They were not unnecessary for his followers. These, in the course of a few hundred years, made Christianity almost as sensational and orgiastic as Hinduism. If they had not, there would have been no Christians.'

As to the characteristics of Hinduism I am very imperfectly informed. Of the rest of this statement one part seems to me to be a truism, the other part untrue. Jesus was a devout, a conforming Jew. The very foundation of his Church lay in the victory of the prophets, his predecessors, over the surgical ecstasies of

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Baal. He could no more have returned to the corybantic revivalism of the distant past than a modern reformer could propose to re-enact the Criminal Law as it was before Romilly and Peel. The orgies – the word being here used in its correct sense – to which the Synagogue had reduced the ancient seven-day period and the nature-feasts of Canaan, he accepted as part of the ordinary framework of life. His ministry began in what was even in the popular sense an orgy, the baptism of John. It ended with what a Greek observer might have taken to be a Dionysiac revel of peasants.¹

The practice of the Church seems in no way to have differed from the practice of its Founder. Its public operations opened in the orgy of Pentecost. The Church of Palestine adhered to the Jewish ritual. The corybantic excesses which developed in the Church of Corinth were sharply repressed by St. Paul. The Church of Bithynia, perhaps in revulsion from the wild nature cults of Anatolia, confined its observances to a weekly celebration which must have been something between Early Communion in a country church and a Methodist Social.

Pious orgies, pious prayers,
Decent sorrows, decent cares,
Will to the Lord ascend.

¹ The ritual of the Passover included the consumption of deep draughts of unmixed wine. That the disciples enjoyed the rite to the full, and unrebuked, is shown by their condition when they got into the cool night air, ἦσαν γὰρ αὐτῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ κατεβρυχόμενοι are the words of the Evangelist and their significance is hardly open to doubt.

Yet as we know from the Proconsul's report these simple rites were winning whole multitudes from the Temples. That, like the prophets of Israel, the fathers of the Church accepted all that was acceptable of Gentile usage is of course true: the precepts will be found in Bede, the process is described at length by Beugnot, the result may be read in *Old Calabria*. But making the orgiasts Christians is a very different thing from making Christianity orgiastic.

'The bearing of these facts,' Mr. Huxley continues, 'on Central America, wars and international disputes in general, is obvious.' As the facts appear to me to be unsubstantiated, I cannot admit the bearing. Nor does Mr. Huxley show what the bearing is. From orgiastic Christianity we take a flying leap, not as I expected to the Crusades, but to nationalistic theology, armaments, war, and . . . the statutory reference to Moloch will be found in column five.

I will not admit even into my own mind the suspicion that Mr. Huxley supposes orgies and orgasms to have any connection with each other, but the scientific method does seem to involve the use of orgy in any sense that comes handy and orgasm when there are already as many orgies in a page as a careful stylist will pass. As I understand the word, the Great Exhibition of 1851 may properly be described as an orgy, and it might be sub-classified as of the intermittent, intra-national type. War is ordinarily international. Among early peoples of an active racial diathesis it is, I suppose,

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of the recurrent type, the warriors going on the warpath as regularly as the women go out to the fields, or young cockerels spar. Among nations of some degree of maturity it is intermittent, an occasional response to a specific stimulus.

The European systems from which our civilization is derived and from which, before the rise of the Central American States, most of our political instruction was drawn, appear when they first come into view to be passing from the phase of recurrent warfare between small groups to that of intermittent warfare between large groups, it being an incidental function of the large group to defend and keep the peace among its component units. The process has left an interesting trace – or gap – in our language. ‘Up to 7, we say Thieves’ one of our earliest kings enacts; ‘from 7 to 35 is a Gang: after 35 it is a *here*’. In future, he implies, there are not going to be any *heres*. So vigorously did he effect his resolution, that *here* became a bad word, only to be used of heathen hosts, with the result that we alone of all the Germanic races have to use a foreign word for Army. But of all topics of national pride, one of the commonest is the good peace within our borders. We are all conscious of a certain satisfaction in the thought that the English police can go about unarmed, and none of us is greatly ruffled by the American retort that it only shows what poor stuff English criminals are made of.

But when we contemplate the

greatest and most efficient of these larger groups in its prime, we observe that in its growth it has created an entirely new phenomenon – something which is not a race, because it is a congeries of races, and still speaks half a dozen languages, and not a state, because it has no single and exclusive organ of government. *Haec est illa Italia*. We observe too that this creation is capable of stirring – or combining – certain definite and recognizable emotions. It is plain for example that Virgil’s attitude to the august achievement of the Roman State is wholly different from his feeling for Italy: and it is remarkable that of the few orgies bzw. orgasms of Italian nationalism which he permits himself, one is evoked by a great national deliverance, one by a great national sorrow, and the most splendid and deeply felt of all, by the peace and beauty of the Italian way of life set in the Italian scene. But it is worth considering, even if it deflects our attention from Costa Rica, partly because Virgil is one of the great articulators of human sentiment, and partly because Italian nationalism as we encounter it through the ages, in Petrarch, in the last lines of the *Prince*, in the Risorgimento and in Fascism is one of the central modes by which our idea of the phenomenon itself can be adjusted.

I feel the temerity of setting my fading recollections of Barbara and her sisters against the hereditary logic of the whole house of Huxley. But if I were invited to prepare a memorandum for the World Psychological Congress

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on Nationalism, which Mr. Huxley proposes to summon, I think I should begin by determining first what feelings are in fact capable of being nationally entertained. No doubt on the other side there would be ranged against me Germans deriving from Fichte, Italians deriving from Mazzini, both ready to prove that I was attacking the problem from the wrong end, and that national feeling is itself a primary and irreducible datum, a necessary mode of national existence. In practical result, there is not perhaps much difference. But to Mr. Huxley's simplicist reduction of nationalism to Hate and Vanity, I think I should respond by a simple problem in practical psychology.

As the future of the world lies in their hands, it is biologically permissible to be interested in children, to be glad when they are good and disappointed when they are horrid. Anyone who reads that a little girl has been knocked down and killed, let us say in Aberdeen, by a motorist who drove away, feels a certain concern, and the automatic bore who was prompt to tell us that there were too many children in the world already, would be regarded by most sensitive people as a cad and by most sensible people as an ass. If it happens in our own village, our reaction is correspondingly sharper. Suppose the victim were the Princess Elizabeth. Millions would feel a direct personal grief, and a direct personal anger against the offender. Or let us imagine that a distinguished man of letters, entering Italy, and betraying by some inadvertent gesture his disapproval of

the Lust, Hate and Vanity about him, was taken to the Guard-room and subjected to Fascist treatment. Few of us would not learn with satisfaction that H.M. Ambassador had been instructed to make representations and that the victim had been visited in his hotel by high officials bearing suitable messages of regret.

Grief for some central figure, resentment of injury done to any member of the group, may be placed among the commonest components – or manifestations – of national feeling. That there enters into them all some sense of self-projection, a complacent self-identification with something less insignificant and transitory than the individual, I readily admit. Indeed, I am not sure that this reaching out towards something more abiding – *principes mortales, rempublicam aeternam* – is not the very thing that distinguishes national feeling from the collective emotion, often no less passionate, of class or party, and gives it the peculiar constructive power which, historically, it is constantly found to possess. But I cannot agree with Mr. Huxley in identifying the emotion with Vanity. I have not Professor McDougall's book at hand, but I think that, to take a simple test, the physical expressions of Pride and Vanity will be found to be entirely different, and I shall only believe in collective Vanity when I see a crowd, on its way to cheer the King, turn its collective head to look at itself in a shop mirror.

The list of components would be a long one, and I can see Mr. Huxley

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chafing until the Conference came to Hate. That Hate is one of them and a very important one, no one will of course deny. But the word Hate, like politics, comprises in itself a difficult subject of no inconsiderable magnitude. It is primarily the emotion appropriate to a realized or apprehended injury, directed to the injurer, and capable of as many provocations and manifestations as the subject is capable of feeling injuries. Its secondary inversions of the *odisse quem laeseris* type, its tertiary ramifications and subtleties, would keep the Conference going quite a long time. But the delegates would have to reckon with the fact that every mode, not one alone, that can be felt by the individual for himself, can by the familiar mechanism of self-projection be felt by the group for itself; and that some of these modes are, so to speak, veridical, indicating like the bristling of a dog's back at the sight of a tramp, that real danger is at hand.

IV

It is here, I think, that the fundamental issue between traditional ethic and modern pacifism discloses itself. To the traditionalist, the Old Stupid of Mr. Huxley's classification, the way of life is worth preserving, and, if it is worth preserving, it ought to keep its appropriate instincts and emotions, vigilance, resentment and, as I have defined it above, even of hate. To the pacifist, the existence, much more the necessity, above all the overpowering

domination as he conceives it, of hate as he defines it, in the total volume of national feeling, discredits the way of life which requires such defence. 'People,' Mr. Huxley writes, 'must be taught to think hatred at least as discreditable as they now think lust.' The logical slither in this sentence is very revealing. Obviously if people at large thought lust – in the philosophic sense – discreditable, and acted on their belief, all our problems would be solved in a – I cannot say generation because there would be no generation to solve them in. But I should like to pursue the analogy here suggested a little further.

Let us imagine that two combining causes, the appearance of a great ascetic teacher and of a new bacillus, made the intercourse of the sexes abhorrent to great numbers and dangerous to all. Of the many consequences two can be predicted with assurance. There would be a great development of the practice and philosophy of homosexuality, and the Home Office would have to deal with an unparalleled outbreak of pornography. The peculiar virulence with which class polemic has been pursued in all countries since the war strikes me in this analogy as the correlative of homosexuality, and much pacifist literature seems to deserve better the name of polemography. Nor, I think, in the circumstances I have suggested, would the subjects of the new age fail to pursue, in every note of real rancour and false disdain, the spouses and lovers of a happier time who could indulge

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their passion unharmed and unreprieved. Until a very short time since, as history goes, war was a pursuit, ethically permissible and personally not very dangerous. None of us can easily adjust himself to a scheme in which it is exceedingly dangerous, not only to the direct participants, and in which the ethical question has for that very reason become to many an ethical negation of the most emphatic kind.

What then are we to do, or rather how are we to think? My own answer, as one of the Old Stupids, would be first: that, ordinarily and with nations of some development, the way of life is worth preserving, because on balance its subjects get more out of themselves by keeping to it than by allowing it to be forcibly changed for them by strangers: and by the way of life I mean the whole body of practices and interests capable of attracting to themselves the essential nationalist emotion. How far the way of life should be inculcated and organized or left to develop of itself, seems to me to be entirely a matter of historic circumstance. I think for example that Empire Day is a foolish disturbance of routine, arising out of nothing that we feel, and symbolizing nothing that we desire to be. If I were a German or an Italian, realizing how recent and how imperfect the national status of my country was, I think I should cultivate the national holidays as instructive and beneficial orgies, and if I caught sight of a scholarly English visitor writhing on the outskirts, I might murmur words of comfort – no Dionysia, no Euripides.

But I am bound to acknowledge that of this process of preservation, what Mr. Huxley calls hate, and I vigilance and resentment, is and will probably remain an integral part, its manifestations being in whatever idiom history, race and circumstances have generated. I see that these regions of 'objective mind' are very sharply defined; that they differ in maturity, in the sense of self-identity, by all the degrees that separate the extremes of activity and passivity compatible with existence: and that the configuration of the corresponding emotion, the proportion of its parts, and their relative sensitivity, may vary almost indefinitely. I know that one nation is more alert about its food, another about its honour: that a Frenchman's feeling about France is a totally different thing from a Russian's feeling about Russia: and I do not expect a rich people, furnished with ability, living peaceably in its habitations, to look out on the world with the eyes of a poor race, crowded in its island, within a few hours sail of wide unpeopled territories. By turning God inside out, the Russians have not ceased to be The Orthodox People, and if Germans find pleasure in reminding one another that they are *deutsch*, the reason is that they always have found pleasure in reminding one another that they are *deutsch*.

A wise, a philosophic pacifism would find in this very variety which makes it improbable, as it is historically rare, for two nations to be after the same thing at the same time, the ground at once for patience and for hope.

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After all, for the greater part of their existence nations live side by side, in mutual indifference which sometimes passes into mutual exasperation, sometimes into mutual kindness. I see no ground at all, except the convenience of invective, for pronouncing that the attitude of England to Germany in July 1914 was nationalistic and that the attitude to France was not; and what mysterious organization of Capitalists and Bureaucrats, what alchemy of inversion, sublimation and protective mechanism created out of Hate and Vanity that sudden surge of indignation and affection,

Hellas blind of an eye and Athens
drawing without her yoke-fellow,

I leave to be determined by those who do not remember it.

Every false philosophy has to be paid for, usually by the triumph of its false antithesis; it takes little to turn the Calvinism of we are all wrong together into the Antinomianism of we are all right in our own way; and the lack of ethical discrimination in modern anti-nationalism seems to me to be a practical menace as much as a philosophical flaw. I am too Old, or perhaps too Stupid, to be taken in by nineteenth-century back-chat about Capitalists, eighteenth-century back-chat about Rulers, or even twentieth-century back-chat about War-mongers, and I see a very real danger in the generation of a body of feeling which, the case arising, would suddenly be realized to be inapplicable. It is not supposed that the

pseudo-scientific pornography which harps on the ignorance and alarms of the immature commonly yields fruit in a stable emotional life, or that the persistent and lurid vilification of one group of human impulses, which makes up so much of ascetic literature, ever had the least effect in regularizing, much less in exalting, the impulses themselves. From the equation

Love=Satyr raping Nymph

I cannot elicit either the *Phaedrus* or the *Vita Nuova*. There must be something else, something for which the ascetic is not prepared, and in which he is more likely than another man to lose his bearings. But I do not therefore deny that Satyrs sometimes rape Nymphs, just as Nazis sometimes beat up Jews, or that both proceedings are ethically undesirable – and (I am bound to add) perfectly comprehensible.

In short, my own conclusion, a very ancient one, is that a wise nationalism and a wise pacifism, both resting on the assumption that what is felt to be good and comfortable for one nation is, suitably transposed, most likely to be good and comfortable for another, are almost interchangeable philosophies, and the only philosophies which are compatible with the fundamental Western faith in personality as the groundwork of ethic and dialectic as the organ of truth. I see not the faintest prospect that the 'objective mind', which does in fact control our individual thought, will, within any time we need consider, be reconstituted on an international or unnational basis: nor

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indeed do I believe that it has reached, much less exhausted, its full efficiency. That personality must at times issue in conflict, as dialectic must at times produce antinomies, is so old a story that the most we can ask of the world is to find from age to age the appropriate device for postponing the antinomy and reducing the conflict to debate, and I am very far from being convinced that the overt lesions of war do greater harm to humanity than the impalpable toxins of class and party. That the manifestations of the crude, the vulgar, the ignorant, the bad-tempered and the clever, will be clever, bad-tempered,

ignorant, vulgar and crude, is one of those identical propositions which add nothing to the argument and which a sensible man will not waste time in advancing or refuting. On the other hand, the intolerance, and the limitations which almost always accompany the profession of the anti-nationalist creed, bear to my eye so ominous a resemblance to the truculence and ignorance of the lower nationalism, that at times I feel drawn towards the conclusion that history, if there is any history left to record it, will pronounce the last war of all to have been made by pacifists.

Venite Exultemus

by Howard D. Roelofs

IT is the good fortune of this present age to have discovered that Religion is a Good Thing. People of earlier ages believed in this religion or in that, and on occasion warred to the death rather than abandon a chosen religion or in order to impose that religion upon others. History tells us even of people who practised the religion they professed. Such people, of course, were rare. But none of these men of a less enlightened age knew that the simple possession of a religion is a Good Thing. It has remained for us through anthropological, psychological, and sociological research not only to have

discovered this important truth, but to have proved it. Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology are the witnesses and supply the evidence that this is so. To have a religion is a Good Thing.

It is the *misfortune* of this present age to have discovered that no Religion is true. This great discovery holds for all existing religions including our own, for all are false. To say 'including our own' is thus logically redundant, but rhetorically essential, for it is the point of this modern discovery. People of earlier ages quite frequently recognized that other religions were false, but they obstinately persisted in holding their

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own to be true. History tells us even of people who were inclined to believe that somehow all religions were true, including their own. Such people, of course, were rare. We have changed all that. We, through anthropological, psychological, and sociological research have discovered that all religions, including our own, are false. And we can prove it. Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology are the witnesses and supply the evidence that this is so. All religions, including our own, are false.

This second discovery is the great misfortune of our age. It robs us of the fruits of our fortunate first discovery. For while religion is in general always a Good Thing, any particular religion is particularly a Good Thing only to those who believe it. This bars us out. For we have discovered and proved that all existing religions, including our own, are false. Accordingly, we do not, we cannot, believe in our own. To be incapable of believing what we know to be false, I need scarcely remark, is the great virtue of the present race of men. Therefore, our religion is not a Good Thing for us. The loss is great. Competent observers agree that the lack of the benefits of religion is one of the striking and pathetic phenomena of the age.

It may be curious to some that so little has been attempted to alleviate this distressing situation. Those who find this curious, do not realize the difficulties that confront all efforts to regain for us the benefits of religion. They may even suppose that nothing is required but to select as a new religion something known to be true,

in order for us all to believe it and thus obtain once more the blessings of religion. With so much science already available and more being produced every minute, all of it, of course, strictly and verifiedly true, it should surely be easy to take a little science, otherwise unemployed, and use it for a religion.

This, however, simply will not do. The reason is a nice one and not always fully appreciated. Hence the numerous efforts to make of this science, or of that, a religion. All of these attempts sooner or later end in failure. The reason is this. A religion known to be false we cannot believe. This is our virtue though it robs us of the blessings of that religion. But equally what we know to be true, we cannot believe. For we know; and when we know, we do not believe: we know. Therefore, what we know to be true, cannot serve us as a religion. This bars out all science, with the possible exception of physics. This possible exception, however, is of no practical importance. Those who believe in physics not infrequently believe also in God, not knowing as yet that all existing religions including their own, are false.

Whatever the fate of the physicists, we have now isolated the conditions under which alone it is possible for the rest of us to have a religion and enjoy its benefits. Whatever our religion is to be, it must meet two conditions. First, it cannot be known to be false. That eliminates all existing religions. Second, it cannot be known to be true. That rules out all Science, with the exception noted. Our Religion, then,

Howard D. Roelofs

must be a something we know not what.

What can this thing be and where can we find it? I have discovered it. That is my good fortune and I now propose to share it with you. The something we know not what, which is to be our Religion, is Sociology. Sociology is not a Science. No one can prove it is true. Certainly no one *knows* that it is true. But equally it cannot be proved to be false. Sociology and all it contains is not, and cannot be, a matter of knowledge. Therefore let it be our Religion.

I realize that to some this may appear rather sudden. That, however, is a common character of discoveries, great ones especially. I wish now to make a slight contribution to this new Religion. This contribution has numerous advantages. If adopted and used it will ameliorate the shock of discovery and ease the transition to the acceptance of the new Religion. More important, it can be used as a test to verify the excellence of what is here proposed. A sure test of the excellence of any religion is its fruitfulness in cult and ritual. I now present a modest sample of what may be expected of Sociology in those fields. This sample is best appreciated when sung, and I commend you to practise it at home. The form is familiar, and suitable tunes will be found at the back of most Hymnals. If you find this sample good, congratulate yourselves on being well on the way to accepting Sociology as your Religion with all the benefits that may bring. You may even be inspired to add to the liturgy thus begun.

A NEW CANTICLE

VENITE, EXULTEMUS SOCIOLOGO
(*To be said or sung at the opening of all groups*)

O come, let us sing unto Sociology; *
let us heartily rejoice in the strength
of our group consciousness.

Let us come before her presence with
thanksgiving; * and show ourselves
glad in her with projects.

For Sociology is a great Hope; * and
a great Light above all Hopes.

In her hand are all the varieties of the
experimental method; * and the
strength of statistics is hers also.

The Social Group is hers, and she made
it; * and her hands prepared the
charts thereof

O, come, let us study and fall down; *
and let us do case studies before
Sociology, our Guide.

For she is the Maker of all Contacts; *
and we are the people of her Adjust-
ments and the sheep of her Com-
plexes.

O, worship Sociology in the beauty of
the Group Spirit; * let both the
privileged and the underprivileged
stand in awe of her.

For she cometh, for she cometh to
evaluate the earth; * and with statis-
tical measurements to judge the
world, and the peoples with an
intelligence test.

Glory be to Sociology, to Statistics, and
to the Group; *

As it was in the beginning, is now, and
ever shall be, world without end.

AMEN.

From Hilary Boom's Notebook

GOD IS A MATHEMATICIAN

PHYSICISTS like Jeans and Eddington have recently been at some pains to show that God is a mathematician. They have not used the best argument of all, which is that a mathematician is usually rather absent-minded.

LIBEL IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE

In France one may take up a journal like the *Action Française* and find one politician cheerfully referring to another as '*Cette girafe bisexuelle*'. Generally speaking, one may read in a French newspaper many intimate details about politicians which in this country would bring editors into the dock, as happened to Mr. Cecil Chesterton more than twenty years ago.

Nevertheless I am at liberty to state in print that any given writer cannot write, though I cannot attack his personal character as (for instance) if I assert that he cannot write because he is habitually drunk. Writing according to English law is a vaguely honorific occupation with no standards to govern it. To state that a writer cannot write is not to state that he cannot make money by his pen, although to suggest

that a man is an incompetent doctor or solicitor is to suggest that he cannot be making money in that capacity.

Therefore as always in English civil law, one comes back to the money test, which has the merit of convenience and simplicity but certainly does not right every wrong. I am only surprised that our law ever got past the stage when a murderer suffered no penalty if he compensated the relations of the deceased – a doctrine which still occasionally survives when a pedestrian is murdered by a motorist.

A DIVINE VISITATION

Leslie Stephen used to relate a story of a man being found dead on Clapham Common in the eighteenth-thirties as the result of being struck by lightning. At the coroner's inquest it was held that this was the result of a divine visitation and some stress was laid on the fact that his underclothing had been burned and not his trousers.

A PATRIOTIC LADY ON THE WAR

'I have heard what you say about life in the trenches. Kindly understand that I do not want my feelings harrowed. I am content to know that the men are doing their duty.'

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MR ARNOLD BENNETT'S CANDOUR

One evening I met Arnold Bennett in the region of Piccadilly about 11 p.m. After a little conversation I asked if he would care to dine with me one night and after some silent meditation he said: 'No, I don't think I should'. This candour, however, always enhanced the value of any compliment he paid, as when after reading a book of mine on a theological subject he said: 'I have enjoyed every word of it and I may say that even I could never have written it'.

THE LIMITATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

Individual liberty is rarely a plant of sturdy growth and has always been subject to certain limitations. Thus in ancient Greece and Rome the good man had to be a good citizen and a person like Antigone was a bad citizen. Moreover all civic privileges of the individual citizen were founded on, and upheld by, the institution of slavery.

The individual liberty of medieval Europe was largely inspired by a theocratic church seeking to dominate, and finally absorbing, the imperial tradition; but even so it was founded on and upheld by serfdom. However apart from the church, liberty was quite compatible with being a link in the feudal chain. Equality before God and the duty of a vassal to his feudal chief were not inconsistent.

The Renaissance theoretically promoted despotism; but despotism is certainly less hostile than democracy to

individual liberty. Moreover it also appealed to a classical tradition of men like Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The Reformation theoretically promoted liberty (e.g. of judgment) but in practice made for the despotism of men like Calvin.

After the Reformation the Jesuits and thinkers like Locke built up the idea of liberty on the theory of a contract between citizen and government, which merged by an odd transformation into democracy; but in practice monarchy and aristocracy have always been more congenial to liberty.

In the nineteenth century democracy was theoretically associated with liberty, as when Kant declared that no citizen should be regarded as a means but only as an end; but in practice liberty thrived in the atmosphere of a quasi-feudal aristocracy represented by Whigs like Palmerston and later by Tories like Lord Salisbury. This atmosphere was disturbed by a huge urban population whose privileges were based on the industrial servitude described in Belloc's *Servile State* (published 1910).

In the twentieth century most of us have had to learn that modern democracy leads to dictatorships and is based on universal servitude where the urban population predominates.

DIVINE MANIA

Plato refers to divine mania and certainly some lunatics make almost inspired utterances as for instance a lunatic who the other day on seeing a

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flash of lightning and hearing a peal of thunder, remarked that God had shot Himself at last – apparently in remorse after contemplating the world of His creation!

SNOBISME

I am always puzzled about the meaning of this word so I wrote to my mentor E.M. and asked him how to define it. My own suggestion of a definition was the 'appreciation of anything beautiful more on account of its social value than of its beauty'. E.M. replied to me as follows: 'I think your definition of *Snobisme* is very subtle and good, but that it doesn't cover the whole ground. The word also comprises the wish to be, for mundane reasons, in the general intellectual swim of the moment, and this can be achieved without any perception of the merits of the object of admiration – which indeed may have none. The Jew *has* genuine perceptions, though he exercises them for a wrong motive – and the victim of *Snobisme* *may* have them, but also he may be merely an echo. How does this strike you?'

LOVE AND DEATH

I once told a Scotch friend that no love affair was so satisfactory as the affair that was ended by death. My friend said 'That is natural, for it means that then the love affair was not really at an end'. How Charles Lamb would have enjoyed this remark!

A TRAMP'S REBUKE

A friend of mine recently told me that the secretary of his Golf Club (a man of the Captain Boldwig type) was majestically parading over the greens when he came across a rather ragged tramp snoring on one of them. He proceeded to stir up the tramp from behind with his foot on which the tramp began to wake up and was sternly admonished not to sleep on the greens again. The tramp then said: 'Well, who are you, Sir?' on which the secretary became purple with wrath. 'I am the secretary of the Upper Tooting Golf Club', he said, to which the tramp rejoined: 'If you are, this is scarcely the way to get new members'.

MR. WILKIE COLLINS AND THE BASTARDS

I remember Edmund Gosse mentioning his attendance at the funeral of Mr. Wilkie Collins at Kensal Green. It was a very foggy and wet day and the gloom of the proceedings was unrelieved until just at the end a woman of ferocious appearance wheeled three squalling infants in a perambulator several times round the grave. Edmund Gosse, slightly puzzled and horrified, turned inquiringly to Holman Hunt, who said 'Those are the bastards'. That is all I heard of the story and I have always since wondered what the admirable novelist's domestic arrangements were, for so far as I have been able to explore the subject, it would

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appear that any child or children of his (whether legitimate or not) would have been at least fifteen years old at the date of his death.

ILLUSION AND HAPPINESS

In his *Sorrows of Werther* Goethe impressively develops the theme that all happiness is based on illusion. This is obviously true about love or money but not so obviously true about work, for as Aristotle points out, the most real happiness is derived from the exercise of our best faculties. Yet even this happiness is often conditioned by illusion as to the importance of the work done. The happiest days of my own life have been spent in congenial talk, sunshine, and good scenery; but this happiness has depended on a background of drab working days and was keener in youth than it is now because youth creates a rose-coloured world by sheer nervous energy. Parenthetically, one sees in youth how precarious the said world is in moments when the said nervous energy flags and everything becomes all the blacker by contrast.

As youth disappears, the religious illusion comes to the rescue 'that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found', among which joys 'may be included the appreciation of Cranmer's incomparable style! The superlative merit of the religious illusion is that it cannot be disproved in this mortal sphere and that it is for this reason

much less expensive than any other form of illusion unless it involves any sort of crippling asceticism.

Granting, however, the expense of ordinary terrestrial illusion, our reluctance to pay the bill is often irrational. Surely one ought to be less ungrateful than one usually is to those who have created the erotic or financial illusions which for the time being made us feel life supremely worth living. I once said as much in conversation with the most phoenixlike financier and company promoter I ever knew, as he lay on his deathbed. 'I don't want gratitude,' he replied, 'what I want is hard cash. Will you lend me ten pounds?' It is always a good rule to lend a borrower half of what he asks or else he will regret not having asked for more, so on this occasion I lent five pounds on the pretext that this would last for the few days that would see the borrower restored to health again, and the dying man, who could scarcely speak or move, was quite happy. His genius for illusion never deserted him till the breath was out of his body and I took off my hat to it!

CREMATION

I can never understand why William Allingham's lines are not inscribed on every crematorium. They run as follows:

Body to purifying flame,
Soul to the Great Deep whence it
came,
Leaving a song on earth below,
An urn of ashes white as snow.

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Another improvement would be to use the tremendous heat of the furnace for warming the building as a whole. I hardly ever attend a crematorium without shivering so much as almost to envy the corpse. I vividly remember my first cremation in 1902 at Woking. In those days there was a switchback apparatus for accelerating the progress of the coffin into the furnace. This so deeply fascinated an old relation of mine who was interested in mechanics that after attending the cremation of his brother he stayed to see subsequent performances. The corpse of which I was in charge had been put into the wrong coffin and I was told that the old lady would have to be taken out in her shroud and put on the switchback. I successfully protested against this; but the cremation took two hours longer than it would have done in a *papier mâché* coffin.

Many years later I was charged with the duty of cremating the daughter of this same old lady during the War, when after her death in Jersey the body was carried about the Channel for some time owing to the menace of submarines. After an interval of ten days the coffin arrived and had to be opened at Golders Green for me to identify it. This experience gave me an even greater prejudice than before in favour of cremation.

CASTRATIONS FROM OBITUARY NOTICES

Of a Philosopher

Never did the world see him so gay and free from care as when he was

consuming a gratuitous supply of tea, coffee, cream, sugar, buns, and tea-cake at the Athenaeum elections.

Of a Financier

He was known to all his colleagues in the city as essentially a 'safe' man, for he never delivered any sort of attack when there was any chance of his opponent being able to retaliate, although on one occasion an erroneous estimate on this point was said to have caused a nervous breakdown of some duration.

Of a Retired Clergyman

He was in such intimate contact with modern thought as to initiate a most interesting series of wireless messages from the next world which he received in the pulpit and transmitted each Sunday to his congregation. Some of the saints (and even The Blessed Virgin Mary) co-operated in giving the most gratifying testimony to his spiritual gifts; but the vulgar hostility of Judas Iscariot found expression in terms which offended the less progressive members of his flock and ultimately, through the wisdom and courage of his family, he retired to an establishment in the country where the messages became even more copious and detailed than before.

Of a Great Lady

From the cradle to the grave she was 'all things to all men' (to use a good old phrase) and even in her last days she was able to supply a company of which

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she was managing director with a succession of comely and stalwart youths who in spite of their humble origin had won their spurs by their assiduous balancing of her household accounts and private passbook.

A Legislator

His masterly handling of the Strong Liquors Adulteration Act and Regulation of Female Underclothing Act in their earlier stages will not soon be forgotten.

LITERATURE IN THE SERVANTS' HALL

Just after the explosion created by Churton Collin's attack on Sir Edmund Gosse, a friend of mine was at a performance of the Hellas Society at St. James's Hall. There Robert Browning told him that that very morning the

servants after family prayers in the Gosse household had announced through the cook that they had entered the service of Mr. Gosse as they were then under the impression that he was an eminent man of letters but that they now read in the newspapers that he was a literary charlatan and must therefore give notice. Later on my friend told the story at the Café Royal to Oscar Wilde, who said 'Well, I think you must give me credit for never having discussed Gosse except in the most unfair terms' This is a charming legend; but the real truth of the matter was that the cook on giving notice and being asked to give some reason for it, said that she did not like seeing Mr. Gosse's name so much in the newspapers. This well illustrates the growth of a myth and is also creditable to the Victorian attitude (even of the lower orders) to newspaper publicity.

Young Man in China

by Tan Shih-hua

I

MY GRANDMOTHER

FACES, words, objects, and the blue Yangtze, in a setting of blossoming mountains, emerge out of the grey, shifting twilight of childhood. When I was two (or one, as the Europeans reckon it) we removed to the village of Hsien-Shih.

The house in Hsien-Shih was much smaller than our ancestral house. It was crowded and poor inside. Father was in Japan, and we had to economize. There was one servant-girl for the house and she came only when my mother was sick. Instead of a vegetable garden, there were only a fruit garden and a tangerine orchard.

I remember my grandmother feeding me with sunflower-seeds which had been dried in the sun. She shelled each seed and, passing them to me one by one, she taught me to count: *l-ge, liang-ge, san-ge, si-ge, wu-ge* – one, two, three, four, five. She also told me fairy tales. Grandmother was the second wife of my grandfather whose portrait hung on the wall in the *li tang*. She was my father's step-mother. Having no children of her own, she lavished all her affection on me.

My mother either worked in the kitchen or taught little village girls to read. I was very proud of her, because in my childhood there were very few women in China who could read, to say nothing of being able to teach.

My grandmother is sewing, and I am sitting by her on a low stool. I have on a long robe, slippers embroidered with flowers, and white socks. One must not go barefoot – people would laugh at you. Only coolies go barefoot. The word *ku* means load; the word *li* means strength. Coolies are low people: dirty, rude, ragged coachmen, boatmen, wandering reapers – in a word, all those who are willing to sell their big, brown muscles, hardened by labour and fights, for copper pennies. I am a little afraid of coolies, but they are treated well in our house, especially by my younger uncle (also a teacher), who is staying with us. For that reason the well-off villagers are suspicious of him.

I am sitting by my grandmother, building houses, temples, bridges, out of wooden blocks. I imagine that I am building my favourite bridge, the one that hangs over the little river flowing into the Yangtze, near Hsien-Shih. It is a stone bridge, all sculptured. Carved dragons, six feet high, guard it. Three

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arches clutch the bridge with their paws. These arches are dedicated to the widows of Hsien-Shih who remained faithful to their husbands even after the latter died.

This bridge was built fifty years ago by a rich man of the village. His only son was a cripple. At the sight of a woman he would throw a fit. No descendants could be expected from this feeble-minded son. The family of the rich man was dying out and, as he had no one to leave his fortune to, he built this bridge. On its flat stones the peasants threshed their grain in hot weather. There was no better threshing-floor in the whole district.

I am arranging my blocks and mixing them all up again at grandmother's feet, which are small and round, like ponies' hoofs. Grandmother called them proudly her 'golden lilies'. Grandmother is sewing and singing, and teaching me a song.

Fly away,
First pair of geese,
Second pair of geese,
Come back again
To find grandmother.
Grandmother does not like
Rice with pork.
Grandmother wants
A wild duck's egg.

I knew why my shrewd grandmother wanted a wild duck's egg. It was rare, and difficult to get. We ate only hen's eggs. Mother and grandmother made a mush out of clay mixed with the ashes of pea or rice straw, and smeared it over the egg. When it dried,

the egg was as big as your fist. Then they buried it in the ground for twenty days. When such an egg was served at the table on holidays, its white was hard and had a brownish colour. The yolk was soft and tasted as if the egg had been freshly boiled. Sometimes there were veins in the white of the egg that looked like cypress branches. 'I had it kept in cypress ashes,' grandmother used to explain to me.

The cool wind stirs the hot air. The blazing hearths are roaring in the kitchen and the plates are clattering in my mother's hands. Far down, at the docks of the unseen Yangtze, the fishermen are shouting loudly, and children are screaming and splashing. I want to go to the river, but I am not permitted. My mother is afraid that I may get hurt, or be insulted, or pushed into the water. 'All right,' I say. 'I'll just take a walk in the garden.' My mother looks at me suspiciously. She takes me to the classroom, dips a brush in an ink-well, puts me on her lap, and paints, with a tiny tickling paint-brush, three-petalled black flowers on the palms of my hands and on the canvas soles of my slippers. Now I may go. Should I walk over a wet place, or splash water with my hands, the flowers will be washed off and I will be discovered.

I had seen other children being spanked by their parents as a result of these tell-tale signs. I did not go to the river.

Near Hsien-Shih the river was terrifying, with its bank dropping steeply down into deep water. The children of the fishermen and boatmen

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swam and dived near the docks, fighting and swearing. The fish-poles bent attentively toward the water. Yellow water broke over the rocks. Shoals of fish swam by on their way to lay their eggs in the small upper streams.

II

BIRTH OF A SISTER

My uncle's school moved to another temple — farther away from our house. To prevent me from getting too tired, walking to and from the school, he took me to live with him, and sent me home every Saturday. He adopted the European method of holidays. In his school, just as in the public schools, we had one day a week for rest. In private schools the pupils had to sit over their books from one Chinese holiday to another, and holidays in China are as rare as springs in a desert.

One week-day I was called out from the class. Our maid was waiting for me. I gathered that something must be wrong with my mother. We had a maid in the house only on days when mother was unable to work. I walked home in a great hurry. On the way the maid told me news which I had not expected at all.

'Your mother has borne you a sister.'

I was glad; I had always been so lonely at home.

The maid turned me over to my grandmother. Craftily and solemnly, the old woman led me into mother's

room. My mother was lying silent on her bed. She was pale and thin. Her arms were stretched out on the cover. A funny little bit of a bed stood next to hers. Something wrapped in white and made entirely of little balls and wrinkles was in it.

'A little girl,' said my grandmother.

I wanted to touch my little sister, but my grandmother would not let me. Having failed in this, I decided to go immediately to a store and get her some sweets. My grandmother sat down on my mother's bed and released her high, thin laughter. She would stop, look at me, then laugh again. I paid dearly for those sweets. My grandmother loved to tease me.

I said to her, 'It is nice to have a girl.'

'No, it is very bad,' she said. 'Here in Szechuan, we have to give a dowry with the bride. It is just an expense. It would be different if we were living in Kiangsu — there people pay the bride's family.'

I did not agree with my grandmother. But she did not care. She was laughing again, probably remembering those sweets.

Careful not to spill it, the maid brought my mother a bowl of boiled chicken. Every woman in China gets boiled chicken for a few days after her labour. Chicken is good. I looked longingly at the bowl. Mother put me next to her on the bed, and we ate the chicken together.

Taking away the empty bowl, my grandmother looked at me, and said seriously and in a business-like manner,

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'Really, Shih-hua, it would not be bad if your mother bore you a sister or a brother every year; then you would eat chicken quite often.'

A month later, our house was buzzing with relatives. Such a lot of them. My mother was walking about, sweet and affable, but still white and thin, although she had not worked all that month. She entered the sitting-room with my little sister in her arms, and all the relatives, one after another, come up to her and touched the little big-eyed girl, whose small stomach was covered with a red flannel apron — a protection against the cold. The relatives argued about whose nose the little girl was going to have, whose eyes, whose mouth. They wished her good fortune.

'May she grow up to be as intelligent as her mother.'

'May she become a good hostess.'

'May she be the most beautiful bride in Hsien-Shih'

'She will be a famous author.'

This last wish was expressed by my older uncle. I knew it because, being himself fond of writing, he always said the same thing to every newborn baby.

The inspection over, the little girl was wrapped up again and carried away. The relatives presented my mother with gifts. There were eggs in woven baskets, cackling hens, bags of sugar, selected rice — beautiful rice, which one would like to string on a thread and wear for a necklace, so beautiful it was — and sweets. . .

My grandmother glanced from the

bag of sweets to me, and began laughing again.

The procession of relatives moved to the dining-room. At the table, the return gifts from our family were distributed, each relative receiving two red eggs. I was sad; we did not have enough money, so I could not stick a gilt-paper hieroglyphic meaning 'luck' on the eggs.

A year later, on my sister's birthday, the same relatives again crowded into our house. A red tablecloth was put on a table in the sitting-room, and all sorts of objects were spread out: a needle and thread, a saucepan, a teapot, a paint-brush, an inkpot, a knife, a book of verses, a book of stories, a flexible fencing-foil, a piece of printed silk.

Then the little girl, who, in her embarrassment, was trying to stick her foot in her mouth, was brought to the table, to see what object she would pick up first. If she takes a brush, she will be an author; if she grabs at a saucepan, she will be a housewife; if she touches silk, she will be a well-dressed woman; if she picks up a foil, she will make herself famous as a heroine or a chieftain.

I don't know what object my little sister chose. Judging by the fact that she is now in Peking University, and shows a great deal of interest in literature, she must have chosen a brush or a book. However, she was a niece of two teachers. So many books and so much stationery were piled up that day on the red cloth that the insignificant needle and thread had no chance of getting into the hands of little Shih-kuen.

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III

AN EXECUTION

I was at school. The days of political slumber were over. Yuan Shih-kai declared himself Emperor. His former stableman, now General Tsao Kun, was moving his troops towards Szechuan to aid the governor of the province against the army of Tsai Sun-po, a follower of Sun Yat-sen, who was threatening the province from the south.

The feet of marching soldiers echoed over the roads to Szechuan. Travelling salesmen came home with tales of the coming war, the battles that had already taken place, and districts that had been demolished. It was still fairly quiet around our town. Here the war was not between the armies, but between the police and the gangs of bandits which had increased considerably during the last few years of war and revolution. The gangs consisted of people like the nephew of the peasant Tchen who lived in the bamboo forest, or of professional soldiers who were left with nothing to do when the war ended, or of former members of Kê-Lao, or wandering farm-hands who could not find employment, and poor peasants put off their land for failure to pay their landlords. There was no lack of ammunition. The defeated armies from the north had left enough rifles in the district. Small bands of discontents would form into a larger group. They would kidnap the rich, the high officials, and tax-collectors, take them into

the woods and demand a ransom. The rich country people began to move into the towns, where they felt safer under the protection of the walls and the police force.

In answer to the kidnappings and robberies, detachments of the *taoyin's* soldiers searched the woods and villages, sometimes catching the bandits. The walls of each village were plastered with white squares of paper offering rich rewards for the capture of a brigand alive, or for his head. Executions of bandits in town followed one another rapidly. Our cook, returning from town, told thrilling stories about the bandits – how brave or cowardly they were at the execution.

One morning the messenger boy who went to town every day for the school mail brought back the news that in a few days fifty bandits would be executed.

'Fifty bandits; fifty of them! It is long since the citizens have had such satisfaction.' The messenger boy was choking with excitement. A rumble of voices went through the school. The leader of the gang, a notorious bandit, aroused most interest, for according to rumours he had murdered the father of one of the schoolboys. We sat in groups on our beds, leaving cards and coins alone, and told each other stories, imagined and true, about bandits. We recalled the poses and gestures of the hero-bandits we had seen at the theatre; sang their songs and recited their speeches. Those of the students who were better informed told us that on the eve of their execution the prisoners

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condemned to die were given a good dinner and were allowed to drink as much brandy as they wanted. The class-mates of the boy whose father had been murdered were vengefully triumphant. A few others remarked: 'But are the *taoyin* and his soldiers any better than the bandits?'

The date of the execution was set for Saturday. Saturday was composition day. When you had finished your composition and had given it to the teacher you were free till next Monday. The entire school was seized with an extraordinary zeal. Slow brains seemed to acquire wings, fingers moved faster than thought. In an hour and a half all the compositions were written and a crowd of boys in black jackets ran down towards the river.

A place under the peaked town wall, at the back of the docks, was the site chosen for the execution. The wall and its peaks were black with people. The second stories of the houses on the other side of the wall were crowded like a theatre. A threefold circle of people, looking over the shoulders and bayonets of a chain of policemen, stood around the space. At first there was no one in the space but two dogs and a busy pig. Then came the first detachment of soldiers. The anguished copper shriek of four trumpeters deafened our ears. The advance detachment of soldiers marched in time to the beat of the sad sound, their rifles resting on their shoulders. The bandits followed them, walking slowly, in hand-shackles and chains. Their hands were chained to-

gether behind their backs and a bamboo rod placed in them. A small plaque was attached to the top end of the rod which rose above the head. On this plaque was written the name of the bandit's village and a description of his crime. The procession was long, the audience silent. The fetters clinked their iron teeth. Some of the prisoners walked with hunched shoulders, some threw back their heads and smiled defiantly, others scowled at the public like wolves. The eyes of some were closed and the blood seemed to have left their cheeks. There were a few who looked as if the nearness of death had already transformed them into corpses; they had no strength to walk and were almost carried by the policemen. Small clouds of dust rose behind their dragging feet. We counted those who passed — there were only forty-nine. The fiftieth had passed away in prison, dreading death.

Behind the last prisoner were the troops. Four carriers bore the blue *chiao* of the police inspector. He was followed by the executioner, a tall man who looked straight ahead. He carried solemnly in his outstretched hand, as a priest carries a cross, a large sharp sword in a leather scabbard. The sword was pointing down and a large red bow was tied around its handle. The executioner was dressed in the usual police uniform.

Frightened, I crumbled my neighbour's sleeve in my hand, afraid to look at the bandits over the heads of the human circle. I swayed on my feet, and my head spun, but I was ashamed to

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expose my weakness before my comrades.

The procession approached the empty square. The soldiers broke the ring of people and formed a half-circle. The criminals were stood up in front of them in two lines, facing the river. The policemen made them kneel. Two or three of the bandits cried out loud, pleading sadly: 'Kill us! Kill us! In a few years we will come back as young as we are now. Kill us!' They were quoting the words of a Buddhist exorcism. Some of them stretched themselves out flat on the ground, almost senseless, pressing their wet, open lips against the dirty sand. Behind the two lines of criminals was a red square on which the gang leader knelt. With the permission of the *taoyin* his relatives had spread a red woollen rug on the ground in order that his blood might not fall on the naked earth. After the execution they would wrap the bleeding body in this rug and carry it away.

Behind the red rug, closer to the wall, a table had been placed. The police inspector sat at the table, the commander of the detachment and the executioner sat next to him.

We could see near the river a pile of freshly cut and crudely painted timber. Those were the coffins — forty-nine of them. They were badly made; the boards were full of cracks.

The hoof-shaped crowd of spectators became a solid, homogeneous mass. Over the heads of the kneeling people on the space towered the policemen. The preparations were short. A policeman pulled the bamboo rod out of the

hands of the gang leader and placed it on the table in front of the inspector. The inspector turned his head toward the executioner. With sure, quick steps the executioner walked to the gang leader from behind. The sword glistened in the air. The head, like a water-melon which had been dropped, crashed down, and two streams of blood spurted upwards from the neck — just for one second. Then the blood streamed down slowly. The executioner gave the kneeling, headless body a push. Someone screamed in the crowd. Others sprang back. Children began to cry.

The bandits did not see the death of their leader, but from the craning necks of the spectators they knew it had taken place. A policeman walked along the first line of kneeling men. He pulled out the plaques from their chained hands and counted them. Then the inspector took the bunch of rods, with the plaques attached to them, from the policeman and counted them again, placing each one separately on the table. The counting finished, he gave a signal to the commander. A short piercing whistle followed. A detachment of soldiers marched behind the first line of criminals and halted, one standing behind each criminal. Twenty-four soldiers behind twenty-four doomed people. At the second whistle of the commander, the rifles were shouldered, their muzzles level with the heads in front of them. A short, sharp report sounded, as if a large board had been broken in two. It looked as though somebody had kicked the kneeling men

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from behind. Smoke from the rifles, clouds of dust from the falling bodies rose over the square.

Stepping over the corpses the soldiers stood behind the second line and after another whistle, the rifles went up again and the firing followed. Then, suddenly and hurriedly, almost at a run, the hoof-like line of soldiers closed tightly around the corpses. The inspector, the commander, and a policeman walked along the piles of human flesh and rags, examining the bodies to make sure that they were all dead. They removed the chains from the feet and the hands of the executed. The chains clinked gaily.

Again there was a birdlike whistle. The bugler sounded the command. The circle of soldiers fell into formation and marched away. Then the public pressed in a tight ring around the corpses and the weeping of relatives filled the silence. You could hear the coffins scratch the sand as they were pulled toward the bodies. The relatives of the gang leader wrapped him in the rug, tying his head in a separate bundle. The scuffling feet of the people soon rubbed the bloodstains out of the ground.

Like an army of ants the crowd began to crawl away. The grey, dusty surface of the square became more and more visible as the streams of people grew thicker in the adjoining streets.

They walked away sullenly, pitying the dead:

'Perhaps they were unjustly condemned. Perhaps they became bandits because they had nothing to eat and

nobody to help them. There are so many hungry people everywhere. What difference does it make where one dies? In a hut of starvation or in a public square by a bullet?'

All that night I could not sleep. Visions of the dead bodies and the red blood streaming over the headless man on the red rug haunted me. When I lifted my head over the blanket I saw the frightened faces of other pupils floating above their beds.

I V

THE FOURTH OF MAY, 1919

The days were getting hotter and hotter. The blue Yangtze grew muddy, the new spring foliage darkened the mountains. People's clothes were lighter, the brims of their hats larger. Paper fans began to quiver again in the hands of pedlars. The same insulting, unforgettable twenty-one demands of the Japanese were still drawn on the fans.

Only a month was left before my graduation. We were having our examination period. And suddenly, like a black Japanese bomb, the Fourth of May exploded over our heads.

Busy with our noisy studying we did not see the teachers running hurriedly to the office of the director. The servants who carried tea to the conference whispered in our inattentive ears: 'A letter . . . important . . . from Peking. They don't know whether or not to show it to the students.'

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Finally, however, the director, accompanied by the inspector and the secretary, were seen walking through the court of the school. The secretary pasted a long letter on the black announcement board. A thick crowd of students, panting with excitement, gathered quickly around the board. Our best orator, who had a ringing voice and clear enunciation, read every sentence of that remarkable letter which began the epoch of the so-called 'Chinese Renaissance'. The letter was from a student organization in Peking to all the schools of China. I do not recall now the exact wording of the letter, although I read it again and again, but I remember very well its content and the order.

The revolution of 1911 overthrew the cursed Manchu dynasty and established a republic in China, but did not bring peace. The evil-minded, greedy, selfish and ambitious people grabbed power in the provinces, and the capital. Instead of taking care of the country, they waged war among themselves for the possession of the riches in the cities and villages. They sold, wholesale and retail, Chinese resources to the eternal enemies of the 'Middle Country' — the foreigners. Yuan Shih-kai, the usurper of the power, who declared himself Emperor, almost accepted the shameful demands of Japan, which would have put China in the position of Korea. The profiteers and liars, replacing one another as rulers of China, would borrow money from foreigners and pay it back in Chinese land, Chinese custom-house concessions, Chinese factories,

mines, iron, tea, or animal skins. The rulers of China joined the Allies in the war against Germany and banished the Germans from a part of Chinese territory occupied by them. They had a right to expect that at the end of the war they would be rewarded for their services and be helped in their efforts to improve their miserable existence. But it turned out that the Allies of China were also profiting by the weakness of China and, instead of rewarding her for services, they were going to give the land taken from the Germans to China's other enemy — Japan. In addition to Taiwang Island, Korea, and Liaotung Peninsula, which Japan had already taken away from China, it was now proposed to take possession of Tsingtao and the Shantung Peninsula. Instead of putting Japan in her place, the Chinese Premier was ready to give her that land in return for a substantial loan. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tsao Tun-lin, notorious for his dishonesty, was conducting negotiations with Japan through Hsan Tsun-sian, Chinese ambassador to Japan.

On the Fourth of May the students of the National University of Peking learned that the decisive negotiations, concerning the price for which the land was going to be sold, were taking place in the palace of Tsao Tun-lin.

The auditoriums, laboratories, and dormitories grew suddenly empty and an unusual meeting of students took place. Indignant speeches flared up. The demonstration, absorbing on its way students of other schools and universities, moved rapidly towards the

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house of the greatest scoundrel and profiteer of China, Tsao Tun-lin. No guard could keep out from that conference of traitors these representatives of the people. Tsao Tun-lin, who knew the arrangement of the palace rooms better than his guest, managed to escape through a back door. Hsan Tsun-sian was seized by the students and given the punishment he deserved. Half-conscious and bleeding he was carried away to a hospital by the servants of his host.

Instead of supporting the students and the intelligentsia and punishing the traitors and their accomplices who had escaped the anger of the people, the Government of China took the side of the scoundrels.

'We,' read the letter, 'the students of all universities and all high schools of Peking hereby assembled:

'(1) Declare a strike in protest against the action of the Government and summon all schools and universities of China to join us;

'(2) Are organizing a union of students of the universities and high schools of all China to join our union;

'(3) Summon the people of China, the intelligentsia, the landowners, tradesmen, industrialists, and merchants to boycott Japan.

'All goods carrying Japanese trademarks must be destroyed;

'All Chinese investments must be withdrawn from Japanese banks;

'Merchants, manufacturers, and citizens must not accept Japanese money as payment;

'Chinese employees working for

Japanese must leave their jobs. The funds necessary to the all students' unions shall be made up of the dues paid by members of the organization and contributions made by citizens.

'We must unite all! Join the union! Appoint a delegate to supervise the execution of the boycott.'

The proclamation was signed by the student Tehchienians who were studying in Peking University.

The letter upset us completely. Boycott . . . union . . . constitution . . . organization . . . collections — all these were strange words. The weight of important political action was laid upon our narrow boyish shoulders. The buzzing of our voices around the blackboard was incessant. Groups of students yelled and shouted in our *li tang*, usually so solemnly silent. Where were our books? They lay scattered about and the hot summer dust began to settle on their open pages. We felt like insurgents. Anxious Huan, my closest friend, was squinting and frowning.

'Shih-hua, we received the letter, but what about the two other schools? And the schools for girls? What if they haven't received the letter and we are unable to persuade them to join us?'

That night we could not sleep. Our meeting rumbled loudly in the light of oil lamps, and the timid sparrow-like twitter of the younger boys mingled with the harsh breaking voices of the sixteen-year-olds. The meeting passed dimly like a cloud of rain. The letter mentioned the constitution of the organization. We had none and we

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knew nothing about constitutions. We spent much time repeating disconnected and incoherent phrases. Finally we decided to appoint a committee — a president, a secretary, a treasurer, and two delegates to represent our organization in the two other schools. I was appointed the secretary.

We had to collect our fund. We resolved that each pupil should contribute one da yang.

Somebody's voice shouted from behind the crowd, 'The teachers have read the letter and say that they will contribute part of their salary.'

The meeting burst into applause.

'We must go to-morrow to see the merchants and ask them for a contribution.'

'Will they contribute?'

'They will.'

'My father will contribute.'

'So will mine.'

'And mine.'

The general meeting of students of all the schools of the town took place in our school — our *li tang* was the largest. On the day of the meeting the *li tang* resounded with people as never before. Eight hundred students were packed into the room. One student after another came up on the platform. When had they learned to speak? When had they found these ardent gestures — these boys who only yesterday were engaged in childish scuffles. Where did they learn to make those exalted, convincing speeches, to which teachers, directors, and the representatives of merchants now listened so attentively, nodding their heavy heads

in time to the angry shouts of their sons and pupils?

The three high schools for boys dedicated themselves, down to the last person, to the anti-Japanese boycott

The girls joined the boys. Two girls' schools agreed to go in with us, but the school administration did not permit them to take part in our meetings. They did not even send their delegates; but a letter from them, written in accurate hieroglyphics, was read out by the chairman.

Every word of every orator fell into the crackling fire of applause. The treasurer reported the rapid growth of union funds. I, the secretary, waving over my head a blue-print map of the town, announced how we were going to carry out the boycott.

'All Japanese merchandise must be destroyed,' I shouted. 'Not a single Japanese object must be hidden. For this you must elect people whose hands are clean. The Peking comrades summon us to join the strike!'

'The strike!'

One after another the orators rose up, praising the strike.

Then Huan spoke: 'The strike — it is all very well. It is right. But we are not studying anyway. We are almost through with our examinations, and our summer vacations begin the day after to-morrow.'

The meeting was in sad bewilderment. How could we strike if we weren't studying at present anyway? The director saved the situation.

'Let us leave everything as it is, but

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we'll inform Peking that we have joined the strike.'

That solved the problem. Our vacation was solemnly transformed into a strike

The town was divided into three districts, according to the number and situation of the three schools. Each school had to clean every store and storehouse in its district of Japanese merchandise. Twelve representatives of each school spent their days walking from one store to another inspecting the goods. Coolies, carrying baskets, followed them. The school delegates walked solemnly with an air of importance and without a smile. They were joyously greeted by the clerks of tobacco shops and by the agents of Shanghai manufacturers. These people were ready to support the student movement with all their money. The owners of small stores, trading in local merchandise, the fruit sellers, the vegetable men, the wood-sellers, and the sellers of other local products smiled at the procession. But the owners of dry-goods stores, haberdasheries, and crockery stores scowled. They thought at first that everything would go smoothly. The boys might shout awhile, perhaps take ten or twenty da yang contribution and that would be the end of it all.

But things went differently. For instance, a delegate entered a store. A thermos bottle and an ash tray were displayed in the window. Japanese hieroglyphics were clearly written on the bottom of the pieces. The delegate raised the fragile objects and threw

them on the pavement. He turned the store inside out while the owner trembled with rage.

Coolies standing behind the delegate began to giggle, winking at the storekeeper. The storekeeper tried to hide a shelf of saucers behind his back. He had paid so much for it! He was ready to put it away in his cellar. Would the delegate give him permission to send it back to Japan and have his money refunded. It was he who was losing money . . . The delegate pushed him aside and with one motion of his hand swept the porcelain to the floor.

The storekeeper wiped the cold sweat off his brow and asked the delegate to step with him into an adjoining room. The delegate, who thought it was a store-room, followed him.

'Take it. It's for you personally. But please leave my store alone. Take it.' He pushed twenty da yang into the hand of the delegate.

The delegate turned pale, sprang back and shouted all over the store: 'If you don't want me to drag you out to the public square where we are going to burn the Japanese goods, put your dirty money back into your pocket.'

Larger objects which could not have been destroyed on the spot were gaily loaded on the backs of the coolies and carried to a temple of which the schoolboys had taken possession. There they were very carefully guarded and, when enough things had been amassed, were carried to a distant square. Sad storekeepers and bald-headed old women cried at the delegates as they passed:

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'Crazy lunatics! To burn such good, expensive things – all for nothing.'

Crowds of people surrounded the fire. Celluloid combs flared up with a white sizzle. The rubber goods burned with an awful stench that mixed with the smoke of soap, bolts of Japanese silk, and toys. Flasks and bottles of perfumes exploded in the blaze. People watched the burning objects with greedy eyes, hoping to save something from the flames, but a guard of schoolboys stood threateningly around the fire to see that vengeance was carried out.

Those were amazing days. In Hankow, Changshi, Foochow, Shanghai, in every city in which university or high school students were present, packages of matches and tooth-powder, clocks, silk umbrellas were cast on the flames. Mirrors cracked, piles of wrapping paper and boxes of patent medicine glowed in the vengeful fires, as the members of school committees stood around shedding tears of anger.

The heads of our organization were flooded with work. The indignant shouts of merchants waving bunches of bills and receipts went on for hours in our committee-room. They were complaining about our delegates who, confusing Chinese trade-marks with Japanese, had destroyed their Chinese merchandise. We tried to pacify the merchants.

'We'll take measures. We'll point it out to our delegates. We are sorry, but we have had so little experience. Mistakes are possible.'

But some of the merchants, too, were behaving outrageously. Instead

of setting out all of their Japanese goods in front of their stores, they tried to hide them. They scraped off Japanese trade-marks and replaced them with American and Chinese. And so the destruction of merchandise unintentionally turned into a war against the merchants.

'Come with me,' cried a merchant hoarsely. 'Come with me. They are rummaging in my store now, and I'll prove to you that they are taking the merchandise unjustly. I contributed fifty da yang to your fund. You demand too much. You will not ruin Japan this way, you will ruin Chinese trade. You are too young.'

I went with the merchant to his store. The store looked as if a general had just passed through it with his troops. Perspiring from his effort, a delegate was turning over, with the help of a coolie, a bolt of gingham. The material had an English trade-mark, but a coolie had explained to the delegate that the marks were too fresh and that if you looked carefully against the light you might see traces of the old trade-mark.

'Look' – and the merchant pushed the English trade-mark into my face – 'these are English goods and they want to burn them for Japanese.'

The coolie fingered the material. Shaking his head doubtfully, he remarked, 'This isn't English. Only Japan can manufacture such bad material.'

The saliva began to pour out of the merchant's mouth. He threw himself at the coolie.

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'Get out, you filthy scoundrel! Who permitted you to come here?'

The delegate explained to me his doubts about the mark. I noticed the merchant's son, my school-mate, standing behind the counter. The boy was silent, but he was pale and obviously excited.

I said, turning towards the merchant, 'You insist that this is an English trade-mark, but we think that previously the material had a Japanese trade-mark.' I looked at his son. He nodded his confirmation.

'Look around,' I ordered. 'Perhaps we'll find Japanese labels somewhere here.' I walked towards the cashier's desk. The Japanese labels were in it. We put them against the glossy squares on the material – they matched perfectly. The merchant laughed.

'That proves nothing.' But his voice did.

'Are all the goods you have out here?'

'This is all.'

'You do not keep your merchandise anywhere else?'

And as the merchant did not answer, I asked his son directly, 'Is there any more?'

The boy's eyes moved from the figure of his father to a closed door.

'Go behind that door and look.'

'A-a-a-a!' An animal-like sound cut the air. The merchant had noticed his son's signal. 'Ah, you scoundrel – you are against your own father!'

The son turned pale, hesitated, looked at his father, then at me, and cried suddenly. 'I am not against my father, but against the Japs and the traitors.'

The merchant was astonished, outraged at his answer.

'We'll talk it over at home.'

He was better off than the others. He at least had someone on whom to vent his anger.

Gradually we matured, became more intelligent and skilful. Our original senseless ardour was replaced by organized work. But it was more and more difficult for the committee to collect funds and extract money from the hostile merchants. Even the agents of Shanghai manufacturers now only smiled encouragingly. They would not open their purses.

In my secretarial desk I had four reports about delegates who had accepted bribes. The reports were written in heavy hieroglyphics as though they had been made with the branch of a tree on sand. Probably some half-literate coolie had written them.

That summer the students of the high schools did not go home for their vacations. The vacation of 1919 proved to be a strike indeed.

[These extracts are taken from the autobiography of Tan Shih-hua, a student in the Russian Section of the National University of Peking, as recorded by his friend and professor, S. Tretiakov. The full autobiography will be published by Messrs Gollancz under the title *Chinese Testament*.]

A Moralist with a Corn Cob

A Study of William Faulkner

by Wyndham Lewis

I

IF I said that William Faulkner was composed in equal measure of Sherwood Anderson and of Powys, I should say all that was necessary, from my standpoint. A gigantic 480-page Morality, like *Light in August*, is to me profitless and tiresome: a Calvinist moralist, delecting himself with, and turning to good library-sale's account, scenes of chopping, gashing, hacking, and slitting, is to me 'abomination' if it is not 'bitchery' – to use the words of one of his more typical figures, 'Old Doc Hines'. But his subject-matter, I agree, cannot be helped – no doubt the great rustic heart of America *is* moralist through and through, with a brand of fierce and blood-lustful sadic morality. With me, it is just that *La Terre* of Zola or the *earthy* works of Lawrence or Anderson, steamy and hot, is not my favourite reading; just that the ranting sadism of melodrama is out-of-date and should be kept out-of-date: that the symbolical villagers of Mr. T. F. Powys are so ethically mechanized, into an abstract system as heavily

centred in Sex, with the full stature of its serpentine capital-letter, as any Freudian tract; and so they, for me, become dull and empty exercises in Bunyan, which prevent me from reading far: merely that writing of the following order, from *Light in August*:

'Now it was still, quiet, the fecund earth now coolly suspirant' (*Light in August*, p. 226), is as I see it irretrievably second-rate, built out of a wordy poetic padding, and every time it occurs (every half-dozen pages that is) it puts me off (I become 'coolly suspirant' myself, with the best will in the world to salute the qualities I think I perceive elsewhere in William Faulkner): it is simply that I have listened to all the 'Black Laughter' that I ever want to hear in the pages of Mr. Sherwood Anderson, and now, five years afterwards, find myself listening to it again in his disciple. Hemingway I can read with delight; but Faulkner fills me periodically with *White Laughter* and I do not thank him for it; I want to forget I am White for a while.

Having made this confession, and

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so warned you that I am not the person to come to for resounding appreciations of Faulkner's books, I can proceed. For this moralist is not an insignificant man, and, as one might expect, his books do contain a moral, which, for our purposes, we may assist him to drive home and develop.

I will begin with purely literary criticism. First of all then, Faulkner, unlike Hemingway, is a novelist of the old school – the actual texture of his prose-narrative is not at all 'revolutionary' or unusual. Just occasionally (as in the opening page or two of *Sartoris* and here and there in *Sanctuary* and *Light in August*) a spurious savour of 'newness' is obtained by a pretended incompetence as a narrator or from a confused distraction – a 'lack of concentration' it would popularly be called if it occurred in the narrative of a police-court witness. There is, very occasionally, a clumsy slyness of this sort, of the *faux-naïf* variety, but it is quite a minor thing. Just now and then – only for a page or two – he will Joyce for a bit, but merely to the extent of innocently portmanteauing a few words just to show he is on the right side, such as 'shadowdappled' or 'down-speaking': but he has not much luck with this, as he is apt to arrive at such a result as the following. 'the rank *manodor* of his sedentary . . . flesh' – which looks too like *escupidor* to be a happy conjugation. For the most part his books might have been written by a contemporary of Trollope or the early

Wells. Nothing has changed since Balzac in the following description of a great 'character', full of 'humours', an eccentric country doctor named Peabody:

'He crossed to an ancient roll-topped desk and rummaged through the dusty litter upon it. There was litter and dust everywhere in the huge room. Its four windows gave upon the square, but the elms and sycamores, ranged along the sides of the square shaded these first-floor offices, so that light entered them, but tempered, like light beneath water. In the corners of the ceiling were spider webs thick and heavy as Spanish moss and dingy as old lace, and the once-white walls were an even and unemphatic drab save for a paler rectangle here and there where an outdated calendar had hung and been removed. Besides the desk, the room contained three or four miscellaneous chairs in various stages of decrepitude, a rusty stove in a sawdust-filled box, and a leather sofa holding mutely amid its broken springs the outlines of Dr. Peabody's recumbent shape; beside it and slowly gathering successive layers of dust, was a stack of lurid, paper-covered nickel novels. This was Dr. Peabody's library, and on this sofa he passed his office hours, reading them over and over. Other books there were none.

'But the waste-basket beside the desk and the desk itself and the mantel above the trash-filled fireplace, and the window-ledges too,

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were cluttered with circular mail matter and mail order catalogues and government bulletins of all kinds. In one corner, on an up-ended packing-box, sat a water cooler of stained oxidized glass, in another corner leaned a clump of cane fishing-poles warping slowly of their own weight; and on every horizontal surface rested a collection of objects not to be found outside of a second-hand store – old garments, bottles, a kerosene lamp, a wooden box of tins of axle grease. . . .’ (*Sartoris*, pp. 101–102.)

There is no reason whatever why a novelist to-day should not use the most ‘straightforward’ methods of narrative – the *Code Napoléon* was good enough for Stendhal, and we might do far worse than model ourselves upon it – I am not at all quoting this passage to damn Mr. Faulkner for being ‘old-fashioned’: my object is to place him technically. More than half of his text belongs, as far as the *genre* of the writing is concerned, to the ‘psychological’ method of Conrad (or the translations of the great nineteenth-century Russian authors).

‘So he would trick and avoid Brown in order to reach the cabin first. He expected each time to find her waiting. When he would reach the cabin and find it empty, he would think in a kind of impotent rage of the urgency, the lying and the haste, and of her alone in the house all day, with nothing to do save to decide whether to betray him at once or torture him a little longer. By

ordinary¹ he would not have minded whether Brown knew about their relations or not. He had nothing in his nature of reticence or of chivalry toward women. It was practical, material. He would have been indifferent if all Jefferson knew he was her lover.’ (*Light in August*, p. 256.)

That is his way of telling a story. It is not ‘from the inside’, nor yet ‘from the outside’, nor anything new-fangled of that sort. It is just the very respectable method that served for a century, from Stendhal to Conrad, say.

But there is a lot of *poetry* in Faulkner. It is not at all good. And it has an in the end rather comic way of occurring at a point where, apparently, he considers that the *atmosphere* has run out, or is getting thin, by the passage of time become exhausted and requiring renewal, like the water in a zoological-garden tank for specimens of fish. So he pumps in this necessary medium, for anything from half-a-dozen to two dozen lines, according to the needs of the case. This sort of thing:

‘Moonlight seeped into the room impalpably, refracted and sourceless; the night was without any sound. Beyond the window a cornice rose in a succession of shallow steps against the opaline and dimensionless sky.’

His characters demand, in order to endure for more than ten pages, apparently, an² opaque atmosphere of whip-poor-wills, cicadas, lilac, ‘seeping’ moonlight, water-oaks and jasmine – and of course the ‘dimensionless’ sky,

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from which the moonlight 'seeps'. The wherewithal to supply them with this indispensable medium is as it were stored in a *whip-poor-will tank*, as it might be called: and he pumps the stuff into his book in generous flushes at the slightest sign of fatigue or deflationary listlessness, as he thinks, upon the part of one of his characters.

To compare him with Ernest Hemingway as an artist would indeed be absurd: but actually he betrays such a deep unconsciousness in that respect as to be a little surprising. In the above passage (about the *impalpable seeping of the moonlight*) you may have remarked a peculiar word, 'sourceless'. If in reading a book of his you came across this word – say upon the first page of *Sanctuary* where it occurs ('a thick growth of cane and brier, of cypress and gum in which broken sunlight lay sourceless') and said to yourself '*sourceless* – what for mercy's sake is that!' you would soon find out. For a dozen pages farther on (where more poetic atmosphere was being pumped in, in due course) you would probably come across it again: and after you had encountered it half a dozen times or so you would see what he meant. But I will give you a few examples of *sourceless*.

Sartoris:

p. 41. 'a thin *sourceless* odour of locust drifted up.'

p. 48. 'the room was filled now with a grey light, *sourceless* and chill.'

p. 145. 'Moon and insects were one . . . dimensionless and *without source*.'

p. 147. 'Invisible and *sourceless* among the shifting patterns of light and shade.'

p. 254. 'beyond the window sunlight was . . . *sourceless* yet palpable.'

Sanctuary:

p. 111. 'a rich *sourceless* voice coming out of the high darkness.'

These Thirteen:

p. 284. 'a *sourceless* goat-bell.'

p. 353. 'From the docks a ship's siren *unsourced* itself.'

Unsourced itself is good; and 'a sourceless goat-bell' too for that matter! But if he is so innocently pleased with this little verbal toy that he uses it upon all occasions, there are other words (apart from such hackneyed ones common to all American books as *frustration*) which he uses so repeatedly that it would be a game for an idle person to count them – 'timbrous', 'viscid', 'shard', 'sibilant', etc. No one ever had less care for the *mot juste*. 'Myriad', I think, is as good an illustration as any, especially as it is a word that is in itself revelatory, an obviously musical and romantic word to catch and captivate the common eyes. Here are a few *myriads* from *Light in August* alone:

p. 78. 'he seemed to hear a *myriad* sounds.'

p. 85. 'Beyond the open window the steady insects pulse and beat, drowsy and *myriad*.'

p. 98. 'he was hearing a *myriad* sounds of no great volume.'

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p. 101. 'the intervals filled with the *myriad* voices.'

p. 246. 'the peaceful *myriad* sounds of insects from beyond the summer windows.'

p. 264. 'the quiet dusk peopled . . . by a *myriad* ghosts.'

p. 266*a*. 'the dark was filled with voices, *myriad*, out of all time.'

p. 266*b*. 'going on, *myriad*, familiar'

p. 290. 'Through the open window comes the hot, *myriad* silence of the breathless night.'

p. 300. 'He hears now only the *myriad* and interminable insects, leaning in the window, breathing the hot, still, rich, maculate smell of the earth.'

p. 365. 'Through the open window there comes now only the peaceful and *myriad* sounds of the summer night.'

p. 466. 'He hears above his heart the thunder increase, *myriad* and drumming.'

These are only a few 'myriads' picked out of one book, casually noted in passing – there are many myriads more than that! But this little word does, I am afraid, tell its tale; as do also the quotations from pp. 290 and 365 of *Light in August*. For the two passages, both beginning 'Through the open windows,' are almost identical, and they occur within hailing distance of each other.

There is no question here of conscious repetition. It reveals the character of this slipshod and redundant artistic machine. And as to 'the open

window', that is, as a matter of fact, invariably *the funnel* out of which the 'myriad' insects, whip-poor-wills, fireflies and lilac blooms pour every five or ten minutes in William Faulkner's text.

'The Spring will soon be here now in Southern Indiana!' exclaims with ecstatic monotony the hero of Hemingway's brilliant skit, *Torrents of Spring*, as he sniffs the *chinook*. And this type of writing (it was Sherwood Anderson that Hemingway was parodying in *Torrents of Spring*) is dealt with as it deserves, and once and for all, in that little critical masterpiece. It must be extremely irritating for him (as for any other American possessed of a critical sense, and desiring to see established in America a school of prose-fiction of a technically tough, non-romantic order) to find this more recent, and now immensely advertised version of Andersonism perpetuating the very type of romantic bric-a-brac which *Torrents of Spring* was composed to discourage. There is no occasion to pursue any further this analysis of the purely artistic quality of the work of Faulkner. His entire output, from that standpoint, is elementary. But it must be remembered that 'the novel' does not stand or fall by its artistic excellence. The work of a certain great Russian novelist, who was a harassed bread-winner as well as a great dramatist, has demonstrated that. And there is much more to be said for Faulkner than this exposure of his technical equipment might suggest.

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II

Faulkner is as full of 'passion' – of sound and fury – as Hemingway is austere without it. He is as hot and sticky as Hemingway is dry and without undue heat. He works up and up, in a torrent of ill-selected words, to his stormy climaxes (just as Hemingway turns down and down the gas, as he himself describes it – lower and lower). With Hemingway the climaxes are registered by a few discreet touches here and there. The characters in Faulkner's books are as heavily *energized* as the most energetic could wish. And if they are all futilely energized and worked-up to no purpose – all 'signifying nothing' – if each and all of his stories is 'a tale told by an idiot' – that does not make his Sartoris, Popeyes, Christmases, the priest in *Mistral* or Temple Drake, any the less an impressive company, in their hysterical way. All are demented: his novels are strictly speaking clinics. Destiny weighs heavily upon every figure which has its being in this suffocating atmosphere of whip-poor-wills, magnolias, fire-flies and water-oaks (not to mention the emanations of the *dark* and invariably *viscid* earth).

And the particular form that that destiny takes is *race*. Whether it is Christmas or Sartoris, it is a matter of a fatality residing in the blood. They are driven on in a crazy and headlong career by the compulsion of their ancestry. Hightower, the disgraced minister, is mystically involved with his grandfather, a confederate cavalry officer:

when he takes up his cure in Jefferson, he amazes and startles his parishioners, 'up there in the pulpit with his hands flying around him and the dogma he was supposed to preach all full of galloping cavalry and defeat and glory just as when he tried to tell them on the street about the galloping horses, it in turn would get all mixed up with absolution and choirs of martial seraphim'. This rapidly became a first-class village scandal. 'The young minister was still excited even after six months, still talking about the Civil War and his grandfather, a cavalryman, who was killed . . . wild, too, in the pulpit, using religion as though it were a dream . . . It was as if he couldn't get religion and that galloping cavalry and his dead grandfather shot from the galloping horse untangled from each other, even in the pulpit.' His wife deserts him, commits suicide, leaps out of the window of a *louche* hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, and he is disgraced. At the end he recognizes that it is his galloping grandfather who has ruined him. He is made to say to himself: 'I know that for fifty years I have not even been clay' (he has never even come to life, he has been a dream – of a galloping grandfather – all the time): 'I have been a single instant of darkness in which a horse galloped and a gun crashed. *And if I am my dead grandfather on the instant of his death*, then my wife, his grandfather's wife . . . the debaucher and murderer of my grandson's wife, since I could neither let my grandson live or die . . .'

Violent death, as this indicates, is a

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matter of such importance in Faulkner's universe, it has such a baleful attraction, for his most ordinary puppets, in expectation or in memory, that it is able, two generations away, to so paralyse the imagination of one of them as to turn him into a dream of death-on-horseback!

The Civil War, and that apparently central problem of the American soul, the Black and White (for it is rather an important issue, all said and done, whether you shall give the negro equality and a century hence have a mulatto America, or on the other hand lynch him as soon as look at him) are the shadows over every life dealt with by Faulkner. The Sartoris family is literally rotten with fatality – there the *doom* becomes deliberately comic:

It showed on John Sartoris' brow, the dark shadow of fatality and doom, that night when he sat beneath the candles in the dining-room and turned a wineglass in his fingers while he talked to his son . . .

'And so', he said, 'Redlaw'll kill me to-morrow, for I shall be unarmed. I'm tired of killing men . . . Pass the wine, Bayard.'

And the next day he was dead, whereupon, as though he had but waited for that to release him of the clumsy clattering of bones and breath, by losing the frustration of his own flesh he could now stiffen and shape that which sprang from him into the fatal semblance of his dream.

Death is a bagatelle to a Sartoris – and indeed a Sartoris only becomes

really effective after demise. As a ghost he is *some* ghost! But it is *de rigueur* that the death itself should be particularly *violent* – that every Sartoris exacts. And in that respect, where all his characters are concerned, Faulkner is a bit of a Sartoris himself

The first Sartoris to whom we are introduced – 'Old Bayard' – dies in a motor car from heart-failure when it dashes down a precipice. And his aged relative, 'Miss Jenny', is not at all satisfied with that. 'Miss Jenny felt that old Bayard had somehow flouted them all, had committed *lèse-majesté* toward his ancestors and the lusty glamour of the family doom by dying, as she put it, practically from the 'inside out'.' But it was all right really, because old Bayard hated motor cars until he realized one day that they were engines of destruction – instruments of *violent death* – especially as driven by a Sartoris, and especially by his grandson 'young Bayard' Sartoris. And so he *insisted* upon his grandson driving him about till they both fell down a precipice.

'In the nineteenth century,' John Sartoris said, 'genealogy is poppycock . . . Yet the man who professes to care nothing about his forebears is only a little less vain than the man who bases all his actions on blood precedent. And I reckon a Sartoris can have a little vanity and poppycock, if he wants it!' But a wife of 'a Sartoris' gets a nasty taste at times – not of 'poppycock' but of unadulterated fatality. '“Bayard,” she whispered, leaning against him . . . She took his face between her palms and drew it down, but his lips were

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cold and upon them she tasted fatality and doom.' And this spectacle of doom and damnation — for it is essentially a judaic doom, based upon Genesis and upon Exodus, a spell cast by the Old Testament prophets — is most sardonically contemplated, and commented upon, by women, negroes, doves and of course whip-poor-wills. Miss Jenny in the cemetery, reviewing the 'swash-buckling' tombs of the Sartoris is a good example of this.

The war is, in a sense, a complication for a 'doomed' Sartoris, because 'doom' in such a war as that of 1914-18 becomes as cheap as dirt. One Sartoris vulgarly succumbs, but the other goes home, and commits suicide in an aeroplane as soon as the war is over and normal conditions of safety restored. And yet, of course, a man beneath a curse, predestined to a violent death, is, in a sense, in his element in a world-war — the element of the lightning-flash and thunder-stone. 'And that's all. That's it. The courage, the recklessness, call it what you will, is the flash, the instant of sublimation; then flick! the old darkness again. That's why. It's too strong for a steady diet. And if it were a steady diet, it would not be a flash, a glare.' (*These Thirteen*, p. 109.)

A flash, a glare — that is what Faulkner's books are intended to be — a very long flash, and a chronic glare, illuminating a 'doomed', a symbolical, landscape — centred in that township of the Old Dominion symbolically named *Jefferson*.

The longest flash and glare of all is *Light in August* — and that, I think, is

a flash in the pan. It is full of wearisome repetitions and is long-winded to the last degree: it is hysterical and salvationist more than is necessary, and it is comical where it is not meant to be. It contains, however, a great deal of good observation and passages of considerable power. Christmas, the half-negro, supplies us with all of these. He is a quite empty little figure, like 'Pop-eye' in *Sanctuary*: but he carries round a big 'doom' with him all right, and he makes it sound. His doom is of course his *blood* — or rather his two bloods, the white and the black. Here is the description of his flight and lynching.

It was not alone all those thirty years which she did not know, but all those successions of thirty years before that which had put that stain either on his white blood or his black blood, whichever you will, and which killed him. But he must have run with believing for a while; anyway with hope. But his blood would not be quiet, let him save it. It would not be either one or the other and let his body save itself. Because the black blood drove him first to the negro cabin. And then the white blood drove him out of there, as it was the black blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood which would not let him fire it. And it was the white blood which sent him to the minister, which rising in him for the last and final time, sent him against all reason and all reality, into the embrace of a chimera, a blind faith in something read in a

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printed book. Then I believe that the white blood deserted him for the moment. Just a second, a flicker, allowing the black to rise in its final moment and make him turn upon that on which he had postulated his hope of salvation. It was the black blood which swept him by his own desire beyond the aid of any man, swept him up into that ecstasy out of a black jungle where life has already ceased before the heart stops and death is desire and fulfilment. And then the black blood failed him again, as it must have in crises all his life. He did not kill the minister. He merely struck him with the pistol and ran on and crouched behind that table and defied the black blood for the last time, as he had been defying it for thirty years. He crouched behind that overturned table and let them shoot him to death, with that loaded and unfired pistol in his hand.

But the 'doom' in the case of Joe Christmas is complicated by a new factor, namely the presence of a personal fate referred to as 'the Player'. This personage only turns up quite at the end of this long trail, and I am bound to say does not behave at all nicely. Here he is — moving Percy Grimm, who has tracked down the fugitive negro, and run him to earth behind the kitchen table in the disgraced pastor's house.

'Jesus Christ!' Grimm cried, his young voice clear and outraged like that of a young priest. 'Has every preacher and old maid in Jefferson

taken their pants down to the yellow-bellied son of a bitch?' He flung the old man aside and ran on.

It was as though he had been merely waiting for the Player to move him again, because with that unfailing certitude he ran straight to the kitchen and into the doorway, already firing, almost before he could have seen the table overturned and standing on its edge across the corner of the room, and the bright and glittering hands of the man who crouched behind it, resting upon the upper edge. Grimm emptied the automatic's magazine into the table; later someone covered all five shots with a folded handkerchief.

But the Player was not done yet. When the others reached the kitchen they saw the table flung aside now and Grimm stooping over the body. When they approached to see what he was about, they saw that the man was not dead yet, and when they saw what Grimm was doing one of the men gave a choked cry and stumbled back into the wall and began to vomit. Then Grimm too sprang back, flinging behind him the bloody butcher knife. 'Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell,' he said. But the man on the floor had not moved. *Light in August*, p. 439.

With this sinister Player (spelled with a capital P) we reach a further complication of Faulkner's studied amateur fatalism. We first hear of the presence of the Player while Grimm is in pursuit of Christmas, before the latter reaches the shelter of the house. 'He

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(Grimm) was moving again almost before he had stopped, with that lean, swift, blind obedience to whatever Player moved him on the Board . . . He seemed indefatigable, not flesh and blood, as if the Player who moved him for pawn likewise found him breath.'

The belief of W. B. Yeats that human life is a game of chess, in which beings of a supernatural intelligence, in another dimension, are engaged, lending us sometimes their wisdom and their strength, seems to be implied in this. But I should doubt if Faulkner is the master of any systematic notion of fatality. Evidently he took a great fancy at some time to the conception of a rigid destiny controlling human life, as exemplified in the Greek Drama: and it supplies the melodramatic backbone of his books. That is all, I think.

III

There can be nothing harder to define than *melodrama* in distinction to tragedy. But a too great addiction to a notion of 'fate', and a consequent loosening and slackening of the 'realistic' web of 'chance' or 'accident', will undoubtedly lead a writer more surely than by any other path — especially if his purposes are sensational, and mainly directed to excite and to entertain — of what would probably be described as the *melodramatic*. Faulkner seems to me to be melodramatic, distinctly. All his skies are inky black. He deals in horror as in a cherished material. Coincidence, what he would call 'fate', does not stand on ceremony, or seek to cover

itself in any fussy 'realistic' plausibility, with him. When the doomed man, at long last, is to be run to earth, there is every probability (according to the law of these *improbable* narratives) that after wandering all over the world, he will be run to earth at the very door of the cottage in which dwells, quite unknown to him, his old grandmother, who, however, has never set eyes on him until that day, and who has no idea whether such a person as he exists or not until she finds him with the rope round his neck. In short, there is *no* coincidence that this robust fatalism is not prepared to admit. This certainly makes novel-writing easier.

Of course, the intellectual morale of a destiny-crank, on the grand model, is sorely tried in any case. It is enervating for him in that respect, even as it is for men at large, in its influence upon their general outlook. The conception of an all-embracing destiny has its concomitant in an obviousness of association, and imposes at once a mechanical form upon existence: as it is pre-eminently the philosophy of the pure determinist.

A man like William Faulkner discovers fatalism, or whatever you like to call it: it at once gives him something to live for, or rather gives his characters something to live for — namely a great deal of undeserved tribulation culminating in a *violent death*. That simplifies the plot enormously — it is, in fact, the great 'classical' simplification, banishing expectation. No one who knows Faulkner's work is in any doubt, in picking up a book of his, as to what

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will happen to the principal character; he will unquestionably die a violent death, there is no occasion to turn to the last page. He is, in fact, as dead already upon the first page, to all intents and purposes, and bloodily dead, as is the corpse at the opening of a Van Dine crime-novel. And it takes a more powerful and subtle intelligence than Faulkner's to cope with this essentially mechanical situation in such a manner as not to make it appear over-mechanical to the reader – or to prevent it from degenerating into a flabby and artificial structure, with eventually the necessary pawns practically emerging from a trap-door, or being telepathically spirited to the spot desired, blatantly in the nick of time. And where everyone knows what is going to happen the temptation merely to moralize the mechanism into *such* a preordained pattern that the march of events is a purely *ad hoc* progression, highly unreal and unconvincing, is very great. In fact, increasingly, there will be little incentive to do anything else, for such a story-teller. His attitude will tend to become like that of the doomed man himself. Why worry? a supernatural agency is at work. Miracles are the stock in trade of a supernatural agency. Indeed, once you have admitted the existence of a supernatural agency, the unlikely and fortuitous are more 'natural' than the reverse. Indeed, it only remains a question of what quantity, if any, of non-fatalist, non-miraculous, constituents you shall include.

Since the climax is from the start

in full view of *everybody*, including the figure who is destined to suffer it, the tendency must be at least to slacken the tension and conventionalize all that comes *in between*. And in *Light in August* – that last of this fatal series and the best example of its dilettante working – that is just what we find. A great deal of prosy melodramatic talk does intervene, in an interminable, sultry, marking time, until the Player shall produce the carving-knife, and balefully point at the root of all the 'abomination and bitchery', namely the sexual organs of the half-cast hero.

The advantages of the destiny-technique, where a highly-trained and intelligent audience is concerned, are obvious, as of course they have been universally accepted as a canon of European art since the time of the Athenian tragedy. If you eliminate the element of surprise (the capital source of a fevered and inartistic excitement) the tragedy can be regarded purely as a spectacle, and, relieved of all the vulgar tittivation and hysteria accompanying suspense, the individual attention of the audience can be given to the quality of the interpretation, the art factor: the actor becomes more important than the plot, subtleties of 'rendition' are not lost, but may be 'savoured' at leisure, a mood of philosophic contemplation may supervene, in place of the dream-like animal unconsciousness accompanying all violent action. The argument in favour of the *pseudo-statement*, or the *absence of belief*, advanced by Messrs. T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards, is established upon a similar principle.

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But the success of this principle, as it issues in works of creative art, must depend upon the specifically *artistic* quality of the executant. And here William Faulkner is very weak. Then it will depend upon the integrity of the taste of the epoch that has called this conception forth. The early and middle Victorian period had plenty of melodrama, upon the Greek 'destiny' model. But it was very inferior stuff. And then it will also depend, for success, upon the intellectual foundations of the system which is responsible for it. And here, as I have said, in Faulkner's case I take it to be a personal fancy, merely, arising out of his experience, certainly (his war-experience, in all probability) but not of sufficient metaphysical solidity to guarantee it against irresponsible abuse. And, apart from the melodramatic 'Player' (who only turns up once, as far as I know), 'fate' seems to be with him a scientific notion, centred in heredity.

If you base your nomenclature upon an ethical vocabulary – call the township where your people have their being Backbite-on-Avon, make its mayor a Mr. Joseph Graft, its judge Judge Geoffrey Gallows, its local detective Ezra Lynx, and so forth, you are following a classical model, and the attention of the reader can be concentrated upon the game you have proposed to him, according to rules that have been universally accepted. The function of the 'critic' in that case becomes a simple one – that is cricket, from his point of view. All is as cut-

and-dried as could be wished, within those disciplines.

Faulkner does not do that, he does not invite such facile comparisons as does Powys. But the town with which most of his books deal is symbolically named 'Jefferson', his Sartoris all have the name of Bayard, that 'preux' whose chevaleresque attitudes they emulate. his diabolical half-cast is called 'Christmas', his outcast minister is named 'Hightower' suggestive of a high aloofness, and so on. The christening of his *dramatis personae* tends to the quality-name. But on the whole it approximates more to Dickens than to Bunyan. Lucas Burch and Byron Bunch (children of a Dickens-like coincidence), Dr. Peabody, Brother Strother and the Snopeses, are a Dickensian company.

I have said (not in disparagement) that Faulkner is an 'old-fashioned' writer compared with Hemingway, and this accounts for a good deal. He has gone back to the old conception of 'the novel,' or he has never emerged from it would I suppose be more exact. He is artistically a contemporary of Conrad or Trollope (his Hightower, for instance, is an American Mr. Crawley of Hogglestock). He is a bold and bustling romantic writer, of the 'psychological' school. That is the main thing to grasp about him. It is, in short, except for a mere handful of *shadow-dappleds* and *manodors*, as if Joyce had never jingled: except for *one* little shamefaced flourish, it is as if Miss Stein had never stuttered:

'Memory believes before knowing

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remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders. Knows remembers believes a corridor in a big, long, gabled, cold, echoing building, etc.' (*Light in August*, p. 111). That is the lot – and it is, now I come to look at it, Joyce rather than Stein – the rhythm is the Irish sentiment, not the Jewish lack of sentiment.

Miss Jenny, in Sartoris and elsewhere, with her 'fiddlesticks', the racy good sense of her comic relief, and the negro chorus generally, are pure Dickens, and there are swarms of oddities, or 'cards' – most of them, in their lives, blatant examples of coincidence, the victims of the minor operations of his pervasive fatality.

All this is to say that he has to be judged according to conventional standards of romantic novel-making: the question of his success or ill-success must be subordinated to the framework of a conventional and unreal pattern. Whereas Hemingway, reporter of genius that he is, fails or succeeds largely upon whether you decide he has got the facts *dead-right*, or, on the other hand, has ever so slightly shifted and conventionalized them in the process of reporting them, Faulkner neglects or ignores that criterion of 'realistic' method. He must be judged according to romantic standards only – as, for that matter, is the case with most novelists. There are few people, who are professional novelists, able to do anything else, if they are to 'make good', than to conform to the more conventional and romantic standards of this rather slovenly, undisciplined,

art. And of course it remains an open question whether such an art deserves the more exacting approach at all.

IV

Of the books I have read of Faulkner's I like *Sanctuary* best. Its hero, Popeye, is sexually impotent, and what is called 'degenerate'. As a child he cuts up live kittens with scissors; he is sent to a reformatory; and in due course, as a man, he becomes the 'killer' of the sort with which we are familiarized by gangster books and films. The automatic strapped under his armpit satisfies the requirements of the sinister vacuum, of 'bloodlust' and vanity, which Nature has installed at the heart of his being, to be his particular destiny. For 'fate' works full-time here as well, and *Sanctuary* is a highly moral tale.

Popeye is, in this case, the instrument of fate, with his automatic and his corn-cob. The book was no doubt suggested to Faulkner by the *Faux-monnayeurs*, of André Gide – that and Judge Lindsay's *Revolt of Youth*. It is, again, pure melodrama, as a gangster and bootlegging novel could scarcely help being. Miss Reba, the brothel-keeper (the scene for instance where the three old cronies are drinking in Miss Reba's office after the funeral of the man killed by Popeye) is an excellent if *scabreux* Dickens. The wife of the bootlegger, Goodwin, hands on hip – her baby in a box behind the stove to prevent the rats getting at it – telling the juvenile good-timer, Temple Drake, what she thinks of her and all her

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kind – the corrupt little ‘college-girl’ tribe, the daughters of the Rich – is a piece of melodramatic moralism, and as such extremely good – and of course politically very much to the point.

‘I know your sort. I’ve seen them. All running, but not too fast. Not so fast you can’t tell a real man when you see him. Do you think you’ve got the only one in the world?’

“Gowan,” Temple whispered, “Gowan.”

“I have slaved for that man,” the woman whispered, her lips scarce moving, in her still, dispassionate voice. It was as though she were reciting a formula for bread. “I worked night shift as a waitress so I could see him Sundays at the prison. I lived two years in a single room, cooking over a gas-jet, because I promised him. I lied to him and made money to get him out of prison, and when I told him how I made it, he beat me. And now you must come here where you’re not wanted. Nobody asked you to come here. Nobody cares whether you are afraid or not. Afraid? You haven’t the guts to be really afraid, any more than you have to be in love”.’ (*Sanctuary*, p. 59.)

But the essence of the book – which I think was missed in the reviews I saw – is to be sought for in the pessimism engendered in any American of intelligence by the spectacle of child-corruption conjoined and coeval with the fantastic lawlessness which came in with Prohibition, culminating in the notorious case of the Lindbergh Baby, and which gave ‘Popeye’ and his

kind (the violent little gutter-Caesars of the Underworld) their chance. For it is not an accident that William Faulkner’s gangster is one of the most insignificant and useless of men, brought to the top by the growing chaos in the heart of society – for whom human beings are flies to be dismissed from life as lightly as a troublesome insect, for the reason that he is himself a thing of the same order – that is undoubtedly the idea, and a highly moral one, you will agree.

The best way to bring out the full meaning of Faulkner’s novel will be to quote a couple of pages from it, which is, as you will observe, a kind of fictional illustration of Judge Lindsay’s essay.

The waiting crowd was composed half of young men in collegiate clothes with small cryptic badges on their shirts and vests, and two girls with painted, small faces and scant, bright dresses like identical artificial flowers surrounded each by bright and restless bees. When the train came they pushed gaily forward, talking and laughing, shouldering aside older people with gay rudeness, clashing and slamming seats back and settling themselves, turning their faces up out of laughter, their cold faces still toothed with it, as three middle-aged women moved down the car, looking tentatively left and right at the filled seats.

The two girls sat together, removing a fawn and a blue hat, lifting slender hands, and preening not-quite-formless fingers about their

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close heads, seen between the sprawled elbows and the leaning heads of two youths hanging over the back of the seat and surrounded by coloured hatbands at various heights, where the owners sat on the seat arms or stood in the aisle: and presently the conductor's cap as he thrust among them with plaintive, fretful cries, like a bird.

'Tickets. Tickets, please,' he chanted. For an instant they held him there, invisible save for his cap. Then two young men slipped swiftly back and into the seat behind Horace. He could hear them breathing. Forward the conductor's punch clicked twice. He came on back. 'Tickets,' he chanted. 'Tickets.' He took Horace's and stopped where the youths sat.

'You already got mine,' one said. 'Up there.'

'Where's your cheque?' the conductor said.

'You never gave us any. You got our tickets, though. Mine was number . . .' He repeated a number glibly, in a frank, pleasant tone. 'Did you notice the number of yours, Shack?'

The second one repeated a number in a frank, pleasant tone. 'Sure you got ours. Look and see.' He began to whistle between his teeth, a broken dance rhythm, unmusical.

'Do you eat at Gordon hall?' the other said.

'No. I have natural halitosis.' The conductor went on. The whistle reached crescendo, clapped off by his

hands on his knees, ejaculating duh-duh, duh. Then he just squalled, meaningless, vertiginous: to Horace it was like sitting before a series of printed pages turned in furious snatches, leaving a series of cryptic, headless and tailless evocations on the mind.

'She's travelled a thousand miles without a ticket'

'Marge too.'

'Beth too.'

'Duh-duh, duh.'

'Marge too.'

'I'm going to punch mine Friday night.'

'Eeeeyow.'

'Do you like liver?'

'I can't reach that far.'

'Eeeeyow.'

They whistled, clapping their heels on the floor to furious crescendo, saying duh-duh, duh. The first jolted the seat back against Horace's head. He rose

'Come on,' he said. 'He's done gone.' Again the seat jarred into Horace and he watched them return and join the group that blocked the aisle, saw one of them lay his bold, rough hand flat upon one of the bright, soft faces upturned to them. Beyond the group a countrywoman with an infant in her arms stood braced against a seat. From time to time she looked back at the blocked aisle and the empty seats beyond.

At Oxford he descended into a throng of them at the station, hatless, in bright dresses, now and then with books in their hands and surrounded

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still by swarms of coloured shirts. Impassable, swinging hands with their escorts, objects of casual and puppyish pawings, they dawdled up the hill toward the college, swinging their little hips, looking at Horace with cold, blank eyes as he stepped off the walk in order to pass them.

At the top of the hill three paths diverged through a broad grove beyond which, in green vistas, buildings in red brick or grey stone gleamed and where a clear soprano bell began to ring. The procession became three streams, thinning rapidly upon the dawdling couples, swinging hands, strolling in erratic surges, lurching into one another with puppyish squeals, with the random intense purposelessness of children. (*Sanctuary*, pp. 167-170.)

I need not interpret this passage very much. No one is likely to accuse Faulkner, after reading it, of a weakness I think, for these herds of nasty children from the two female ones slammed down into their seats, 'turning their faces up out of laughter, their cold faces still toothed with it,' to the two male ones who played *faux-monnayeurs* with the conductor, droning 'duh-duh-duh,' or breaking into a 'meaningless squalling'; or in general the aimless swarms 'lurching into one another with puppyish squeals, with the random intense purposelessness of children.' The females 'swing their little hips' in the identical manner that Temple Drake swings *her* 'little hips' - they

are in fact her 'college' companions - and any of them would behave much as Temple Drake did in the bootlegger's den, or later in the brothel, we are, I think, given to understand.

Most significant of all, however, as an indication of the attitude adopted by Faulkner to these things, is the 'woman' of the people - the 'country-woman with an infant in her arms', who is compelled to stand, and 'brace herself against a seat', because the aisle is blocked by these 'myriad' offsprings of the vulgar bourgeoisie, who cannot even express themselves except in an uncouth jargon of 'done gones' and 'eeeeeyows', literally like portentous 'puppies' of some common and senseless bitch!

What you are intended to see in these scenes is undoubtedly the proliferation of a spoilt, a *purposeless*, a common, an irresponsible bourgeois society, awaiting, surely, if ever a society did, its *coup de grâce*. For nothing could be more bleak and redolent of 'chaos come again' than the pages of this violent morality-play.

The drunken 'college-girl' egging on the 'killer' to do his stuff, namely to kill, on the way to the dance-hall where 'Red' is put on the spot, is typical of the manner of conveying this ugly lesson. - Temple Drake taunts Popeye:

'You're scared to!'

'I'm giving him his chance,' he said, in his cold soft voice.

'Come on. Make up your mind.'

She leaned towards him, her

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hand on his arm. Then she got into the car. 'You won' do it. You're afraid to. He's a better man than you are.'

He reached across and shut the door. 'Where?' he said. 'Grotto? He's a better man than you are!' Temple said shrilly. 'You're not even a man! He knows it. Who does know it if he don't?' The car was in motion. She began to shriek at him. 'You, a man, a bold bad man, when you can't even ...' (*Sanctuary*, p. 230.)

This is the 'little-hipped' doll, 'toothed' with mechanical smiles, *in action* — in the great world outside school and the family circle. She is the little sensational robot pupped by the American million-dollar-dugged capitalist system. That is certainly what this particular 'thriller' is intend-

ed to convey. And what Temple Drake gets is undoubtedly what has 'been coming to her!' What Temple Drake actually gets is a corn-cob; and the author's message to his country is beyond question that that is what Temple Drake, and all her kind, deserves. It is a harsh piece of sardonic pedagogy, no doubt, delivered with the hysterical violence we have come to expect from its author. But is it not salutary? Could anyone in their senses look upon this book as 'obscene', in any morally derogatory sense — regard it indeed as anything but a pure work of edification? None but the most stupid — or those who felt themselves involved in its purgative lessons — could do that. William Faulkner is not an artist: he is a satirist with the shears of Atropos more or less: and he is a very considerable moralist — *a moralist with a corn-cob!*

Opatrnostr!

by Eric Walter White

'Die Welt ist rund; drum Bruder lasst uns reisen!'
—Motto of the Hamberger *Zimmerleute*

I WAS born at Polaun near the frontier between Silesia and Bohemia; and when I look back to that time, this is the first thing I remember. But how can I be certain that it is true? for in the scene I see myself as clearly as my mother, and that is ab-

surd. You must imagine me in the big double bed at home (for at that age I slept with my parents and thought no shame), and my mother sitting on a chair by the side of the bed, combing her hair by the light of a candle. She is waiting for my father, who is probably

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taking off his boots downstairs and bolting both front door and back, and she takes no notice of me, for only my head is above the sheet and I have screwed up my eyes to pretend I am asleep, until there is only a dim misty little slit, through which I see the room trembling, as if there were a brazier beneath it, and my mother moving the comb through her hair with a dry hiss like a snake's. I know it must have been summer, for the window is open, and we always kept the window closed in winter because of the cold. And suddenly a puff of wind blows in from the dark sleeping hills outside — those are the Giant Mountains — claps the window to the wall and snuffs out the candle as if with its finger and thumb. My mother never moved — she was that sort of woman — but went on running the comb through her long dry hair in the dark; and I held my breath under the rough unbleached sheet when I saw the sparks fly upward, for I was terrified to think she might be some ogress or witch as she sat there calmly at the window with her head clearly to be seen against the midsummer-night outline of the hills and her hair spitting fire.

This scene I forgot for many years, until one spring I was working with other *Zimmergesellen*¹ on the annex to a school near Bebra. There I slept in a tent with my comrade, Atze, because there was no room to house us in the school itself during term. The tent was high enough for one to stand and dress

or undress² while the other lay; so even when it rained (and the rain came through where we touched the canvas), we were quite comfortable and healthy. We lay alternately, in the way sardines are packed: my head by Atze's feet, Atze's head down by my feet; clothes, tools and beer bottles (usually empty) in between. Atze had shown me how to dig out the earth beneath the ground sheet so that our buttocks fitted comfortably into the hollow cup. It was a great thing to lie there at ease in the dark, drinking and maybe smoking, with the heat from our bodies rising and keeping the tent in a decent fug the whole night through.

There were two schoolboys who paid particular attention to us as we worked; and one evening they climbed out of a window and drummed on the canvas of our tent. We called them in, for we were thankful for a little company. It was clear that their heads were crammed full of romantic nonsense, and that was why they found it more exciting to lie on the hard ground in a stuffy tent with a couple of *Hamburger Zimmerleute* than in their well-sprung beds under the school roof. The first night they came, we gave them *Korn*² to drink, for we wanted to see what they would do and let us do when they were drunk. I can hardly say it was worth the trouble. One of them became sick, and Atze had to hold his head out under the tent: the other tried to go to sleep with his feet up under my chin and shouted every time I touched him. By the time we

¹ Journeymen carpenters, plasterers, bricklayers and the like.

² A common spirit distilled from grain.

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had persuaded them to climb back into the school and return to their proper beds, it was already dawn.

When next they came, they brought food with them: the tail-end of a liver sausage and a tin of sardines. Although Atze and I had eaten supper, for some reason or other we were still hungry. We finished the sausage, squeezing out the paste on to a crust of bread that remained over from our evening meal; then, while Atze prised open the sardine tin, I felt something hard in one of the boys' pyjama pockets and pulled out a handful of sugar. So we lay there in the dark, all four of us, licking the sardine oil off our fingers and clothes, trying to remember indecent rhymes, and as we scrunched the sugar, sparks flew out of our mouths and I remembered my mother sitting by the open window, combing out her hair.

At that age I used to cling to my mother's skirt for protection. The stuff was thick and rough and smelt like the shop where they sold pins and elastic and stockings. Inside her skirt I could feel her broad round legs. When on Mondays or Tuesdays she pinned up her skirt and trod out the clothes in the washtub, they resembled two pillars of some soft blue-veined stone. Sometimes as I clung to her skirt, I could feel the muscles of her thighs twitch like the muscles of a horse when a fly walks over its coat. She had a curious habit, when she was distracted, of passing the back of her hand down my cheek and under my chin; but that was when my hair was still down and before I had

begun to shave. She never took much notice whether I was dirty, or of the way I dressed.

My father was a woodcutter.

In Polaun the first snow falls in October; but the land is not rightly covered before the beginning of December. I remember standing on the doorstep of our house when I was still quite a tot, and shivering as the cold of the newly-fallen snow struck upwards beneath my clothes. An extraordinary quietness lay over the white village and the white mountains like the silence of the passing angel twenty minutes before the hour; the mountains were as colourless as the heavy, unmoving sky, and the trees looked like blown glass. Villagers passed along the street on skis – *hiss-siss* went the skis downhill, *hthwack-hthwack* returning – and the pointed ferrules of the ski-sticks squeaked in the crisp snow like a ferret heard in a wood at night. Suddenly the cold gripped me in its vice. I was too astonished to cry out. Instead, I straddled across the street to the nearest glass tree, and did what I wanted. When I saw the fine white snow round the trunk all riddled and stained as if with hot tea, I felt panic-stricken and, turning in my tracks, ran back to the house. There stood my mother in the living room by the tiled stove with a blue-rimmed cup in her hand. I ran to her, crying, and hid my head under her skirt. I believe I thought I had done something wrong.

I can hardly have been five when I first started to ski. It happened that

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my father left his skis standing propped against the house wall. Somehow or other I pulled them down and arranged them parallel as I had seen my father arrange them. Then I put my feet on the white shiny treads in the middle of the boards and pushed. At first the skis refused to leave their forms in the snow; but suddenly they both shot forward and carried me off with them. It was hard to keep my balance with the skis slipping downhill like live things beneath me; but I managed to do it. A wind sprang up and slapped both my cheeks for my pains; the landscape split, unrolled itself to right and left and joined up again behind me. My father must have seen me before I came to the second bend in the road, for he shouted, and in turning round to answer him I lost my balance, the toes of my skis crossed, and I ran slap into the telegraph pole that stood at the side of the road. One of the skis stuck in the snow; the other went bounding off down the road, mounted the snow bank at the corner and slipped over into a field belonging to our neighbour, Anton Masseck. There it ran downhill like a thing possessed, until it stuck in a hedge, whence my father finally retrieved it with some difficulty. In striking the post I had uncrusted the snow from a metal shield nailed to the wood. At that age all I noticed was that a sheet of forked lightning ran down the side of the legend. Later, when I could read, I found that the notice said: *OPATR-NOSTR! Caution! Danger of Death!* Curiously enough, this was the very

shield that led to my first fight some years later.

Polaun lies high on a ridge – in fact, on the watershed between the valley systems of the Iser and the Oder – and the school I went to lay down in the valley just outside the village of Gruntal, only a stone's throw from the railway. We were nearly fifty children there, boys and girls, half of us Czech, the other half German. In winter naturally I could reach the school in less than five minutes on my sleigh; in summer it took longer; and as in any case there was such a steep climb back to Polaun, I used to take my lunch with me and eat it in the school or by the river according to the season of the year. The only other of the schoolchildren from Polaun who did the same was Gerda Masseck, our neighbour's daughter. I liked Gerda. She had a proper respect for the boys of her age and didn't go whispering and giggling with the other girls in the corner of the yard under the lime tree or behind the wood shed. In the summer we used to go together to a pool formed by the river after a slight fall. There we could bathe and eat our lunch as we lay drying in the sun. I was about twelve years old, and she was probably the same age. When the midday train from Gruntal to Gablonz passed by on the other side of the river, we would be splashing about in the water or still undressing, and sometimes the villagers who knew us and were going in to market would wave their handkerchiefs and newspapers at us, or throw us peachstones and bad fruit.

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One day – I think it must have been a Friday, for I remember trying to pick a fish-bone out of one of my back teeth – Gerda left me lying on the tilted stone where we used to spread ourselves out to dry, and disappeared. There was nothing strange in that. I went on trying to find the fishbone in my mouth and wriggled about on the stone so that the dust and gravel bit into my skin and stuck. When I had extracted the fishbone, I got up and brushed the dust and gravel off with my hands. What I could see of my body was a fine brick colour with fantastic patterns and blotches stamped on the skin in a deeper colour red. I called Gerda to come and see. There was no answer. I couldn't believe that she had already left, so I went to the place where we had undressed. My clothes were gone: Gerda's were still there, partly under the tree, partly on the tree, as she had left them. I looked round. There stood Gerda on the footpath, dressed in my shirt and trousers and belt. My things were a thought too large for her, and she had not had time (or had not known how) to do up all the buttons; but, in spite of that, I was surprised to find how lovely she looked in my old blue shirt. I had half a mind to give it to her, but in the end I thought better of it and chased her into the coppice to get it back. Thereafter (as you can guess) we had much fun with our dressing and undressing after school down by the river.

I never dreamt anything was wrong, until one Sunday afternoon Gerda led me to a telegraph post in the

village street, the same post into which I had crashed the first time I attempted to ski, and there, underneath *Opatrnostr!* I read, 'Paul goes with Gerda in the wood.' A drawing followed, crude but explicit, the sort of thing you see scrawled up in back lanes and bathing boxes. Had I been older, I might have been more sensible and taken no notice of the whole thing; but, like all children, we were nettled, and that afternoon Gerda and I plotted revenge.

The first thing to do was to find out who had written it. That was not difficult. Gerda went to Elizabeth, and Elizabeth told her she had seen Svato-pluk scribbling on the shield the evening before, and when she had asked him what he was scribbling, he had merely laughed and covered it up with his hand to tease her. We then had to find out where Svato-pluk was. That also was not difficult. The Krňanskýs were a pious family, and it was fairly certain that willy-nilly they had taken Svato-pluk off with them to evensong. Gerda and I went round to the church and waited among the tombstones. The service was soon over, and presently (sure enough) the Krňanskýs appeared. I sent Gerda after them and saw how she caught up Svato-pluk at the corner of the vestry by the grave with the broken urn. I don't know what she can have said to him, but whatever it was it excited no suspicions, for he left his parents and walked back slowly with her towards the spot where I was lying in wait. When he was quite near, I jumped up and confronted him and laughed to see how the colour left his cheeks as the true reason for

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Gerda's soft invitation dawned on him. I sent Gerda away to the corner of the churchyard wall to keep watch, and I told Svatopluk what I thought of him and of the relations of his parents when he was born. Thereat he hit me, a poor blow that was meant for my chin, but missed it and glanced off my shoulder. I didn't hit him back, but told him to take off his coat and his starched Sunday collar if he didn't want to be strangled alive. This he did. I also took off my windjacket, gave my trousers an extra hitch for luck, and spat on the palms of my hands. Then, without wasting more time, we went for each other.

The ground was uneven and made our footwork difficult. I hit him on the nose and made it bleed. Then I tried to hit him on the nose again, but the blood made his face so slippery that my fist slid into his mouth and his teeth rasped the skin off my knuckles. Svatopluk hit me several times, but I was too occupied to notice where. Then he tried to trip me with his foot. That made me mad. I lunged wildly with my left. He sidestepped and caught me on the ear. I dropped my guard and went all out for his body. I hit him in the wind and he went down like a tree. It was plain that he had had enough for the moment. I told him once more what I thought of him. There was a taste of blood in my mouth. Then I left him lying there, and Gerda and I went off together, feeling that we had cleared ourselves. By then it was nearly sundown and the churchyard full of shadow.

The next day as we bathed in the river, Gerda was curious to examine the bruises on my hands and body, I laughed at her for her pains; but thereafter we looked at the marks daily and watched them change colour. When they had nearly disappeared, she was so desperate that she put her teeth to my shoulder and bit me in the same place to prolong the visible signs of my heroism. This went on for some weeks.

Atze also was fond of scribbling about the place. When we were *Zimmergesellen* together and worked with the other apprentice carpenters, he used to scrawl messages and signs on the wood work we put up: a heart pierced by an arrow, two hearts overlapping like an eight tangent to eight, diamonds, spades, the Pik Ass and other tools, in fact, the whole paraphernalia of suits and symbols. When I asked him if he were not ashamed to leave such an improper signature to his work, he used to laugh and ask what it mattered since the painters always came the day after and painted it all out. The result is that all the woodwork in the houses by Bebra and Fulda where we worked together is marked with his invisible tattooing, and none who lives there knows it.

I also am tattooed – the breast, the lower half of the right arm and part of the groin – but that was in another town.

I can't say I was really happy at home when I grew up. I had no wish to follow in my father's footsteps and become a woodcutter, nor did I want to go down to Silesia and work in the coal-mines. My father used to taunt

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me with the fact that I was unemployed; but I can't say his taunts made much impression on me, for unemployment is the rule rather than the exception with my generation and even at that time many of us had never known what it was to have a paid job. He would be angry if he came in of an evening and found me sitting in his armchair with my feet up against the stove, and for some reason or other it also displeased him that I frequented Gerda and the other village girls. So one day when I was nearly seventeen, I made up my mind to leave home and go to sea.

Hamburg was my goal. I had seen photographs of the harbour and the shipping in a cinema at Gablonz, and suddenly I decided that I wanted nothing so much as to get on a ship and sail to foreign parts. When I told my mother, she said little enough, but I think she was sad. My father was pleased. He promised me enough money for my fare fourth class, and beyond that fifty marks. When the time came to leave Polaun and cross the frontier, my mother helped me pack my rucksack and stuffed the corners of it full with small crab apples. She also gave me two pairs of thick woollen socks she had knitted herself and a bookmarker for my pocket Bible, on which she had embroidered:

*Schiffe ruhig weiter, wenn der Mast
auch bricht.*

*Gott ist dein Begleiter, er verlässt dich
nicht.¹*

¹ Sail quietly on, e'en when the mast snaps through.
God's your pilot He won't abandon you
(trans)

The apples I ate in the train, and the bookmarker I should have with me to-day, were it not for the fact that both my Bible and my watch were stolen from me the first night I slept in the 'Pik Ass' at Hamburg. This put me in such a temper that I left the 'Pik Ass' the next day and, instead of searching for a ship, I buried myself in the cafés and *Kneipen* of Sankt Pauli and drank until I was blue. I drank, and I danced, and I sprawled on sofas with broken springs, making ineffectual love to the easy Hamburg whores – perhaps not so ineffectual after all, for next comes a great gap, and when the haze clears, I find myself lying in a strange bed, being shaken by a strange man, while a strange woman, with whom (apparently) I have been sleeping, continues to sleep on, snoring slightly. I know that I got quite willingly out of the bed, and that the strange man pushed me outside on to the landing and thrust my clothes into my arms. Then I must have sunk down and gone to sleep against the door, for when the strange man came out five minutes or five hours later (I have no idea which it was) I was still lying there, clutching my clothes in my arms. Apparently he had a sense of humour, for he woke me, greeted me with a hearty *Hummel hummel!*¹ and when I had dressed on the landing, suggested that, having slept with the same woman, we ought in common decency to breakfast together. (He also told me the joke about the buttered bun, but I won't repeat that here.) I was

¹ A local Hamburg greeting.

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naturally quite willing to breakfast with him; the only difficulty was that I had no money left. Atze laughed that off and invited me as his guest; so we breakfasted downstairs in the café to the brothel, where apparently madame was willing to give him credit.

We took to each other easily – in any case our introduction had been favourable – and I soon told him exactly how I stood. It didn't matter whether I had been robbed or not but as I sat there at the stained wooden table, stirring my nut-brown coffee with a cheap bent spoon, I had a splitting head and no money in my pockets. I told Atze of my project to go to sea. He laughed it down. Why shouldn't I join him and become a *Zimmergesell*? Why, indeed? I didn't even know exactly what a *Zimmergesell* was; I had never seen one all the time I had lived in Polaun, and I had no idea of the complicated organization of their guild.

Atze got me into his lodge, rigged me out with the proper outfit – broad-brimmed black felt hat (the top hat was falling out of use), corduroy jacket, bell-bottomed trousers, double-breasted waistcoat with large mother-o'-pearl buttons, mason's fob, brass ear-rings (they pierced my lobes for that) and so on – and even found me work on the same job as himself. That was in 1927, before the bad days came upon the building trade in Germany. When this job was finished, Atze decided to leave Hamburg for Hanover, and as I had not yet paid off the debt I owed him and it is usual for *Zimmerleute* to

tramp about in couples, we left together on the waltz and wandered through Hanover, Cassel, Bebra, Fulda, working a day here, a week there, and sometimes longer.

In Bebra we found a job on the annex to a school just outside the town, and as there was not enough room for us to sleep in the school itself during term, Atze got hold of a tent and erected it at the bottom of the garden. There were two schoolboys there who paid peculiar attention to us as we worked, and one evening they climbed out of the school and came to us – but I have told you all that before.

Between Bebra and Fulda we fell in with a *Tippelschickse*¹, a dark-haired, greasy-skinned woman like a gipsy. I cannot say that I was very struck by her myself, but Atze took to her like a duck to water and insisted that she should accompany us as far as Fulda. It was all very well for Atze, but for me the pleasure was second-hand. However, I didn't grumble; I was too fond of Atze to want to spoil his sport and I remembered how the tables had been turned at Hamburg.

Anna, the *Tippelschickse*, proved too useful to Atze for us to drop her in Fulda, so she tramped on with us to Wurzburg, and there we struck a bad patch. I was kept hanging on with the promise of work. Atze could find none. But the change of climate and the mildness of the town were so pleasant that we could not find it in our hearts to leave. However, Anna earned enough in her spare evenings

¹ A vagrant prostitute

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to pay for the room we shared, and on our second Sunday she invited us to wine.

It was an early summer evening, mild like the south. We sat in a garden restaurant under the open sky, and the tables were lit by bright electric bulbs strung overhead between the chestnut trees. Anna sat opposite me and played with her glass. Atze sat between and was familiar with Anna. She had bought him a cigar for two groschen, and he smoked it in a cardboard holder.

The wine they make in Wurzburg is good and mild: it tastes of the sun. We drank one of the cheapest and youngest brands – somewhat heady, but not so dangerous as *Most*¹. Atze was in a good humour with Anna. He called her his treasure, and she called for another bottle, and I saw that the third finger of her right hand was marked where a ring had been. Curious! I had never noticed that before. Anna's foot touched mine under the table, but Atze's arm was round her shoulder and occasionally she took a pull at Atze's cigar. Anna's foot was persistent, but her eye avoided mine. The waiter brought us the next bottle, and as I looked at him, he reminded me of Svatopluk, Svatopluk whom I had forgotten since I left Polaun. I asked him if he was Svatopluk Krňanský, and he said no; I asked him the same question in Czech, and he thought I was making fun of him. But when I looked at him again, I saw he was right – he was certainly not Svatopluk Krňanský, although for a moment I

could have sworn to God that he was, so I asked him to bring me pen and ink, letter-paper and an envelope, and there and then I wrote a letter to my parents to tell them I hadn't gone to sea, the first letter since I had left home. As I wrote that letter, Anna's foot left mine, but when I came to my meeting with Atze in Hamburg, I felt her look passing over my face, caressing my cheek, like the back of my mother's hand. I looked up and met Anna's eyes. Atze was no longer at the table. I asked where he had gone, but Anna said he would be back in a minute. She asked me what I wrote, and then, without waiting for my answer, she said, 'Atze wants me to-night, but I want you without him.' Those were her very words. I can swear to them, because I hear them now in my head and the rise and fall of her voice as she said them. I don't think I had time to reply before Atze was back in his seat, but it was answer enough that, when she had finished speaking, our eyes never flinched, our eyes gave us both away.

I finished my letter – you know the sort of itinerary: Hanover, Cassel, Bebra, Fulda, Wurzburg – and as an afterthought I added in a postscript that, if my people at home cared to answer, they could address me at the Post Office, Lindau, for the wine that evening was drawing me south and I had a feeling that by July I should reach the Bodensee. As I licked down the envelope, Anna gave me a stamp. Atze laughed (he was drunk); but I felt nervous and almost ashamed that,

¹ Young wine only a few months old.

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although I knew every inch of Anna's body, I had come to covet her that evening with real desire.

I left the table to post my letter. There was a letter box at the side of the restaurant. The young leaves of the chestnuts were all fresh and sea-green where the light of the electric lamps shone through them. Moths fluttered clumsily against the hot bulbs. The speech of the people in the wine-garden was soft. The white-napkin'd waiters moved among them like angels.

As I stood by the letter box, Anna touched my arm. I followed her gently. No one prevented us from going out. She had probably paid. I had no wish to turn round in case Atze should be following. After touching my arm, she withdrew her hand, and in the road we only lurched against each other accidentally.

She seemed to know where she was going. When she turned to the right, I followed. When she crossed the bridge I crossed too. The streets were mostly empty, though once someone struck a match in a shop doorway. We came to a park. Anna walked in the shadow between the trees. The paths were ill-lit. We came to a part where it was pitch dark. I wanted to sit on a bench, but Anna walked on. Presently she left the path. I thought the grass would be too damp, but Anna came to some bushes, slipped between them and stopped before a kind of gardeners' hut. I tried the door. It was locked. Meanwhile, Anna had opened the window. Apparently she knew how to open it. She climbed inside, and I

followed. I realized that now I should have to pull myself together. Inside the hut I moved with exaggerated precaution. It was full of gardening tools. I took off my clothes and left them on a nail where bast was hanging. I found a mat and spread it on the floor. And then I found Anna.

Neither of us slept during the next four hours. We left the hut before it was light in the park and returned to our room. Atze was not there, but his things were gone. I never saw him again.

The next fortnight with Anna was a disappointment – in fact, it was exhausting, and I began to wish that Atze had not deserted our trio. The climax came when I picked up a good job in Ulm, and Anna refused to work. Even that would have been all right if she hadn't begun to bleed me at the same time.

I must say I never suspected her until one Sunday morning when I suggested we should go for a walk and she insisted on going to church. Out of curiosity I went with her. We arrived late – they were already in the middle of the service – and I felt completely lost. Far away the priests were moving about before the altar and mumbling prayers. Sometimes the choir sang, and sometimes we had to kneel. A bell tinkled and we knelt again. I wanted to go; but when I looked at Anna I saw that this performance was doing her good, so I composed my impatience and tried to find out what it was all about. The language was strange and I couldn't make head or tail of it,

Opatrnostr!

until suddenly the beginning of a prayer caught my ear – *O Pater Noster!* – and I was transported back to my home in Polaun. In my imagination I saw the familiar hills covered with snow, heard my father's voice call me as I was carried off on his skis, and ran again into God's lightning printed as a warning to men on the telegraph post. *O Pater Noster – Opatrnostr!* indeed.

Presently a velvet bag was handed round. I saw the people in front of us put in money and wondered whether it would be possible to take anything out. Anna must have intercepted my glance, for she whispered me I was to do nothing of the kind and produced her purse. Although she opened it with considerable care, she was not clever enough for me, and I caught sight of a ten mark note tucked away in one of its pockets. Then I started furiously to think. She had certainly not had that note there the day before, and I knew she had not gone out in the evening. On the other hand, I had drawn my wages Saturday morning, and it would have been comparatively simple for her to take a note from my case while I was asleep at night. This might also explain her sudden spurt of devotion, so unlike her usual self. Suspicion hardened into certainty during the blessing, and as soon as the congregation rose, I hurried Anna out of the church.

Naturally she denied it; but that sort of greasy-haired gypsy woman would swear blue was red, and the fact remained that I was ten marks down –

explain it as she might. I lost my temper and threw her out. I threw her out of our lodging and threw her belongings after her. Then I locked the door, flung myself down on the bed and (while Anna howled on the staircase) slept soundly until the evening. When I awoke, it was dark, and Anna had gone. I went out in the rain and got drunk. That night I slept alone and in peace. Atze had left me. Anna had left me. I was single again.

You may think that I had seen the last of Anna – I thought so too – but such *Tippelschucksens* cling like burrs and turn up in the most unlikely places. (If you're interested enough to hear the rest of the tale, perhaps you'll order another beer.)

It was in August that I came to Lindau, and by that time I was quite ready to bath myself and bathe in the lake. That was easy, since Lindau is built on an island and two jetties run out into the lake to form a harbour. But after washing myself I fell ill and took to my bed, which just shows that you can't be too careful. They removed me to the lazaret for a week, and there I used to let the nurses take a peep at my tattoo marks against payment in cigarettes. In this way I kept myself in tobacco and only wished I had had a more extensive repertory with which to amuse them. At the end of the week I was discharged and left the hospital without a scar on my body and penniless, but my pockets were bulging with cigarettes. As I stood in the street, a thought struck me, and I hastened to the Post Office. They asked for my

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passport, and then they handed me over a letter six weeks old.

Wait a minute. I think I have it in my pocket book. Somehow I never had the heart to throw it away. Yes, here it is:

'My dearest son This is heavy news to send you but I have no one else in the world now that your father is gone and in case you haven't enough money to pay the fare I send you same in banknotes which I hope will arrive safely for you never know these days The funeral is on Saturday so come quickly or the neighbours will talk and say Otto Reichardt went down unhonoured to his grave which is untrue It was yesterday the storm broke as I was collecting the scraps for the hens Your father was out on the road but I had no thought for him until that second flash of lightning which lit up the back room all blue and shook the house with the clap That must have been the bolt that struck him poor man before his prime They found him lying on the road his face all scarred by the flame I can see it now if I lift the sheet for he lies on the kitchen table waiting his time I rely on you my son to help me in this hour God's will be done'

What did I do? What could I do? The letter was six weeks old. My father was already under earth. I went to the bank and changed the notes. Then, at least, I had money.

It was early to start drinking, but that was my only cure. Beer, *Korn*,

*Schorle-Morle*¹, brandy, wine, more beer, more *Korn*. The daylight went out in the street and the lights in the *Kneipe* went on. They asked me to pay and I paid, but they did not ask me to go. The longer I sat there in the corner with a glass before me, the deeper grew my affection for my father. I felt the tears gathering in my eyes as I thought of him lying on the kitchen table with his beard slowly growing beneath the sheet in which I had so often lain as a boy. My mother's letter was in my pocket. The stamp was on the envelope where she had stuck it down As I called for another beer, I was not in the least surprised to see Anna sitting opposite. She could drink with me too, if she liked. I had thrown her out, but my father was dead, and I wanted to lay my head in her lap and cry. A man came in and spoke to Anna, but he wouldn't drink with me. Why wouldn't he drink? I asked Anna why he wouldn't drink with me as I laid my head on her shoulder, and she ran her fingers through my hair, but said the man was of no importance because he had said he wouldn't drink with me and probably he didn't want to drink. This was too hard for me to understand, and they wanted me to pay again. I was just going to give my notecase to Anna and tell her to pay, when I remembered something, so I paid myself. I don't know if they gave me any change. Anna didn't want me to go, but I said I must go, my father was dead. So she said if I would wait there five minutes

¹ A mixture of wine and water

Opatrnostr!

she would come with me. Which I did, for I was too sad to get up without Anna's assistance. Outside it appeared to be night, and there was Anna at my side, making up to me as in the old days. She seemed to know where to go, so I followed, and the lights danced on the water like will-o'-the-wisps. We were on the jetty. As Anna had probably calculated, the fresh air cleared my head and brought back my desire. She stroked my face with the back of her hand. There was no one about. I took her to me in despair. My father was dead.

Someone was coming. Anna clung to me, but I re-arranged my dress. We stood waiting for the man to pass, but he did not pass. He asked me what I was doing to this woman. Anna began to cry. He said he would call the police. I said it was all sausage to me whether he called the police or not. He said did I want to go to gaol, if so I was going the right way about it. I said what business was it of his what I did to the woman. He said she was his wife. I laughed. Anna agreed she was his wife. He said he would drop the matter if I paid him a hundred marks. I asked him who he thought I was to pay him a hundred marks. He said he was certain I had a hundred marks. I said I was a poor *Zimmerer* and my father was dead. He insulted my father and insisted on the hundred marks. I said how the hell did he know I had a hundred marks. He sprang at my throat.

As we grappled with each other on the jetty, I realized many things. I

realized that Anna had betrayed me and that this man was after my money, the money which should have brought me to my father's funeral. I realized that he was trying to strangle me and that Anna was kicking my shins. And I also realized that my illness had left me weak, that the drink had made me stupid and that I was not strong enough to deal with this man as I had dealt with Svatopluk in Polaun. There was only one thing to do. When I felt him disengage his left hand and try to unbutton my jacket, I thrust my leg between his feet and, as we staggered across the jetty, still locked together, I reserved my last strength for the moment when we stood swaying on the edge of the lake wall. Then I twisted his body so that he lost his balance and fell. I fell with him, but he was underneath. I thought we should fall into the lake, but we fell on to stones. The man screamed, but I had the presence of mind to thrust my hand into his mouth. His teeth bit into my flesh, but the scream stopped. I picked up a stone and hit him on the temple. The bone cracked like an eggshell. His hand fell back from my throat. His mouth was full of my blood.

It was suddenly quite still, windless. A few feet away the lake water rippled against the stones. The jetty rose darkly above me, but I could see no sign of Anna. I opened the man's jaws and extracted my hand. I felt for my pocket book; it was intact. Then the thought struck me: perhaps the man was dead. I began to tremble all over. I couldn't touch him. I

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picked my way over the stones and came upon a rowing boat made fast to a ring in the lake wall. I stepped in, fitted the oars in the rowlocks and cast off. At first I rowed as quietly as I could, facing the spot on the jetty where I thought the corpse was lying; but when the lights of the town broadened out, I chose a red light to steer by and rowed towards the Swiss side of the lake. Somewhere about the middle I stopped rowing and bathed my hand in the lake water. The night was still breathless with suspense. There seemed to be no movement in the air or in the water. But above me, through a rift in the clouds, I saw a bright star shining. I spat into the water and shook my fist at the star. I had killed my first man, and my father was dead.

The next day I came to Zurich; but my hand took a fortnight to heal. You can see the scar on it now.

I don't know that there's much more I can tell you. I never returned to Polaun and I've never heard from my mother since. I'm unemployed (have been for the last seven months), otherwise I shouldn't be sitting here, in this sort of *Lokale*, talking to you.

I won't take another beer, thanks, but I'd rather you gave me the price of it. If you're prepared to treat me to two or more, so much the better. They charge you seven groschen a glass here and it's not a bad brew. But the money suits me better.

[*N.B. The foregoing story was told me by the Fremdenzimmergesell, Paul Reichardt, in a Casino on the Friedrichsgracht, Berlin, in the autumn of 1931. I am responsible for the notes and the translation E.W.W.*]

Franz Kafka

by Edwin Muir

I

THE reputation which Franz Kafka has won since his death in 1924 is a peculiar and in some ways unique one. To a few people he is a great writer, but one can never tell to what school of taste they may belong. Since the appearance of the English version of *The Castle* a few years ago

he has been praised in the highest terms by writers as diverse in their ideas of what constitutes literary excellence as Mr. Aldous Huxley, Mr. Herbert Read, Miss Rebecca West and Mr. Hugh Walpole; and when his most recent book, *The Great Wall of China*, was published in Germany, Thomas Mann,

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Herman Hesse, André Gide and several other well-known literary men united to pay homage to him as one of the greatest writers of modern times. It is fairly safe to say that anyone who admires him would agree with that verdict; for if one acknowledges his virtues at all one has no choice but to put them in the first rank. On the other hand, there are many who simply can see no merit in him; and it is inconceivable that there should exist any large body of readers who consider him a writer of respectable talent, which is the way to fame.

The reason for his unique reputation, and unique lack of reputation, is, I think, quite understandable, and lies in the fantastic strangeness of his imagination. A reader beginning *The Castle* may easily feel that he does not know what he is reading about, and not because of any obscurity in the language – for Kafka's style is scrupulously clear – but because such extraordinary things happen and such curious conversations are carried on. In reality Kafka is a great story-teller and a great master of dialogue; but that can matter little to any one who cannot understand either the characters or the happenings or the conversations in his books. His obscurity is not caused by any desire to puzzle or impress his readers (no other modern writer is more candid or seeks less to exploit his gifts); it is caused simply by the peculiar originality of his genius, which is one for thinking in concrete images. He is a profound religious thinker, but the product of his thought

is not a system but a world of imagination. As his thought, however, is subtle and comprehensive, his imaginations demand from the reader an effort somewhat like that required to follow a close line of abstract reasoning. To think in this particular way was clearly natural to him; many of his best aphorisms are really short parables. Consequently his semi-allegorical stories are really the most simple and unaffected expression that could have been found for his genius; not in the least a form of mystification, though to many people they must read somewhat like that. Given Kafka's special kind of imagination and complete honesty in following it, something like this was inevitable, and there is no help for it.

Kafka himself, indeed, did his best to injure his reputation beforehand. His three greatest stories, *The Castle*, *The Trial* and *America*, might have been lost to us altogether if it had not been for the courage of Dr. Max Brod. Before he died Kafka left instructions that they should be burned along with all his other papers. Dr. Brod has publicly explained his reasons for setting aside his friend's request, and they are entirely to his honour. Had these three books never appeared Kafka would still have been known as an exquisite minor artist in the fable, the parable and the short story: these books alone support his claim to be considered a great writer. I shall have space in this essay to consider only one of them, *The Castle*, which has the advantage of being available in English; and even it I shall

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have to treat somewhat perfunctorily; for Kafka's stories are so packed with meaning that what they really demand is not a general criticism so much as a running commentary. Anyone who wishes to have a good portrait of Kafka as a man will find it in the figure of Richard Garta in Dr. Brod's novel, *The Kingdom of Love*, which the author tells me is based entirely on biographical data. No life of Kafka has yet appeared; and little is known of him except that he was born in Prague of well-to-do Jewish parents, studied law in the university there, worked later in an insurance office, had an unfortunate love affair, fell ill of consumption, spent many years in sanatoriums and Bohemian mountain villages trying to recover, and finally went to live in Berlin, where the effects of the Allied blockade helped to carry him off in 1924 at the age of forty-two. The writers he seems to have studied most closely were Pascal, Flaubert and Kierkegaard, the Danish writer, the last of whom deeply influenced him.

II

Between 1917 and 1919, a few years before his death, Kafka jotted down over a hundred aphorisms. He evidently attached more importance to them than to his other work, for he went to the unusual pains of copying them out on separate slips of paper and numbering them. They are striking compressions of the chief problems that troubled him during his life, and are not only remarkable in themselves but

throw a great deal of light on *The Castle* and *The Trial*. Probably the best approach to the world of these books is therefore to be found in the aphorisms, and I shall begin by quoting a few.

On the problem of conduct which occupied Kafka in all his work:

The true way goes over a rope which is not stretched at any great height but just above the ground. It seems more designed to make people stumble than to be walked upon.

On salvation, which is the main theme of *The Castle*:

There are countless places of refuge, there is only one place of salvation; but the possibilities of salvation, again, are as numerous as all the places of refuge.

On the universal effects of the Fall of Man:

Some people assume that in addition to the great original betrayal a small particular betrayal has been contrived in every case exclusively for them, that, in other words, when a love drama is being performed on the stage the leading actress has not only a pretended smile for the lover, but also a special crafty smile for one particular spectator at the back of the gallery. That is going too far.

On the law of this world:

The hunting dogs are playing in the courtyard, but the hare will not escape them, no matter how fast it may be flying already through the woods.

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On its incommensurability with divine law:

Only here is suffering suffering. Not in the sense that those who suffer here are ennobled somewhere else because of their suffering, but in the sense that what is called suffering in this world is, without any alteration except that it is freed from its opposite, bliss in another.

On the confusion caused by our divination of this:

He is thirsty, and cut off from a spring by a mere clump of trees. But he is divided against himself: one part overlooks the whole, sees that he is standing here and that the spring is just beside him; but another part notices nothing, has at most a divination that the first part sees all. But as he notices nothing he cannot drink.

On the impossibility of transcending this state:

You are the problem. No scholar to be found far and wide.

These questions and others connected with them are what Kafka is concerned with in all his voluminous imaginative work, or rather they are the roots out of which it grew. They are not philosophical, but religious questions. They do not aim at an intellectual criticism of religious conceptions, in which religion is accepted merely as one among several worlds of discourse; but rather take the main categories of religion as self-evident truths, and concern themselves with

what, after full acceptance, remains inexplicable or unresolved within religion. To a rationalist impervious to their force they would probably provide as fine a set of arguments showing the absurdity of believing in religion at all as could be found. Indeed Kafka himself was conscious of their absurdity; it was at the root of a great deal of his grave, casuistical humour. But the absurdity was to him a real and actual absurdity; not a figment of the mind which could be done away with by thinking differently, but an absurdity incarnated in all the circumstances, great and small, of human life. Religion was, in other words, the whole world to him, or rather he saw the total sum of possible experience in terms of religion. His imagination moves continuously within that world and does not acknowledge that there is anything, no matter how trivial or undignified, which it does not embrace. Accordingly it is in its unique way a complete world, a true though unexpected reflection of the world we know. And when Kafka deals in it with the antimonies of religion he is throwing light at the same time on the deepest riddles of human life.

We must give a contingent assent to Kafka's religion, therefore, before we can understand the world of his imagination. It is a world absolutely definite in main outline, but endlessly subtle and intricate in its working out. At its centre, and in its most remote manifestations, lies the dogma of the incommensurability of divine and human law which Kafka adopted from

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Kierkegaard. Man is incapable of apprehending the divine law, and it is possible for the divine law even to appear immoral in his eyes: Kierkegaard founded his argument on the sacrifice demanded by God from Abraham, which according to human standards was arbitrary and unjust. On the other hand, it is man's duty to direct his life in accordance with this law whose workings he cannot understand, even if all aid from Heaven should be denied him; and that is the other side of Kafka's belief, and the dramatic foundation of his greatest work *The Castle*. The hero sets out to mould his life completely, to the most pedantic detail, in the pattern of the divine will. He can get no acknowledgment from Heaven, he is tricked and repulsed, according to his own lights, again and again: he is not granted even his small preliminary request, an earthly vocation by which he can live honestly. Nevertheless he fights on, getting farther and farther from his goal; and at last when, quite exhausted by the struggle, he lies on his deathbed, word comes down from the Castle, that though he has no legal right to live in the Village, the community of the faithful, he is to be permitted to live and to work there henceforth in consideration of certain auxiliary circumstances. It is a highly ironical conclusion, yet it is also a statement of faith: the hero's struggle is justified at last, not by any earthly standard, it is true, for he is finished with the world, but by the fact that he has achieved a moment of pure reconciliation with the divine will. It

is in the strict sense a final victory, yet one of which, as a human being, he can make no use, for it gives him nothing but the recognition of the Castle which all his life he has been vainly trying to win. Thus even his death does not abrogate the law of the incommensurability of divine and human law, for his victory is, humanly considered, the most complete and final defeat of all.

III

The root of Kafka's peculiar humour lies in this incompatibility between the ways of Providence and the ways of man. It is a comedy of cross-purposes on a grand scale, and ranges from the most farcical to the most delicate effects. It is in the very texture of his work and can only be illustrated by showing how he manages the action of his stories. At the beginning of *The Castle* K., the hero, is challenged by an official on his arrival at the Village, and says on the spur of the moment that he is a land-surveyor sent for by the Castle authorities. Appealed to, the Castle authorities reply that they never heard of him before, but a moment later they ring up again to say: 'There's been a mistake: K. is the land-surveyor'. Next morning K. sets out for the Castle, which he can see quite clearly perched on a hill and hopes to reach by an easy walk. But he finds that he never gets any nearer to it; 'for the street he was in, the main street of the Village, did not lead up to the Castle

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hill, it only made towards it and then, as if deliberately, turned aside, and although it did not lead away from the Castle it got no nearer to it either'. This kind of thing keeps happening to him over and over again. He had told a Castle official whom he met in the Village that his assistants were following on and would presently arrive. On his return from his unsuccessful walk he finds two young men, exactly alike, awaiting him, and they introduce themselves as his assistants. They are really from the Castle and their names are Arthur and Jeremiah. As K. cannot tell one from the other he decides to call them both Arthur. He commands them to ring up the Castle; immediately they both rush to the telephone, keep snatching the receiver from each other, and shout into the mouthpiece at the same time, until he has to drive them away. Next he decides to speak to the Castle himself, and having grown wary by this time, tries to pass himself off as his original assistant, Joseph. The Castle is quite complaisant and replies: 'Very well; you are the old assistant Joseph'. On the top of this Barnabas, a messenger from the Castle, arrives with a letter in which K. is told that he has been engaged for the Count's service and that the authorities wish him well. As Barnabas leaves K. rushes after him and takes his arm, hoping to get into the Castle with him unobserved in the darkness, for it is by now midnight. But Barnabas merely goes back to his own shabby home in the Village, where he lives with his parents and his two sisters. And so K. goes on,

finding complaisance everywhere and making no progress at all. His first serious rebuff comes from the Village Superintendent, who is to assign him his duties. He discovers that there was some question of a land-surveyor many years before, but that there has never been any conceivable use for a land-surveyor at any time and that there is none now. In compensation he is offered the post of janitor in the Village school. A little while later, when he is suffering from a still more crushing rebuff, Barnabas brings him another letter. It runs: 'To the Land-Surveyor at the Bridge Inn. The surveying work which you have carried out thus far has been appreciated by me. The work of the assistants too deserves praise. You know how to keep them at their jobs. Do not slacken in your efforts! Carry your work on to a fortunate conclusion. Any interruption would displease me. For the rest, be easy in your mind; the question of salary will presently be decided. I shall not forget you.' Not till much later in the story does K. discover that the letter from the Count purporting to engage him was an old one probably not intended for him at all, and that Barnabas is not an authorized messenger. As time goes on K.'s relations with the Castle become more and more involved, the communications he receives from it more and more questionable, and he discovers that 'the reflections they give rise to are endless'.

This comedy of misinterpretation, at once farcical and intellectually subtle, is then peculiarly characteristic of

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Kafka; but he also has another kind which is related to it and probably flows from it: the comedy evoked by the imperfection of all human arrangements. The janitor's job that K. was offered in compensation for his intended post is a good example. There are many curious things about it. First of all the school has no need of a janitor, and secondly it has no accommodation for one, possessing only two class-rooms. Accordingly K. has to live in one of them along with his fiancée and the two assistants, and move into the other whenever the curriculum requires. He arrives very late the first night. It is the middle of winter, the stove is almost out, for the teacher has carried away the key of the wood-shed. K. decides to break open the shed with a hatchet. Immediately the assistants begin to carry in huge piles of wood, and keep flinging them into the stove so quickly that the room becomes unbearably hot and everybody has to undress and lie down in their shirts. In the morning they are all awakened by the arrival of the lady teacher and the school-children. 'With Frieda's help – the assistants were of no use, lying on the floor they stared in amazement at the lady teacher and the children – K. dragged across the parallel bars and the vaulting horse, threw the blankets over them, and so constructed a little room in which one could at least get on one's clothes protected from the children's gaze. . . . The assistants, who had obviously never thought of putting on their clothes, had stuck their heads

through a fold of the blankets near the floor, to the great delight of the children.' (The last touch is the very quintessence of Kafka.) The humour here is the kind that rises from the contemplation of pedantically conscientious inefficiency; every action is perfectly reasonable yet, except to the actors, senselessly absurd. It is really a hackneyed music-hall type of humour, the sort we laugh at when we see a comedian frenziedly trying to do two jobs at the same time, rushing from one to the other across the whole breadth of the stage, and punctually falling each time over the same obstacle in the middle. Kafka uses it deliberately as an image of the imperfection of human action. K.'s life as a janitor in a school that does not need and has no accommodation for a janitor is for him a symbol of existence. Man lives at cross-purposes and attempts impossible tasks in ludicrous situations. One of the aphorisms runs: 'His weariness is that of the gladiator after the combat; his work was the whitewashing of a corner in a state official's office.' Had Kafka described the scene one feels that he would have put the corner beyond reach, made the brush too short, and perched the pail of white-wash where it was bound to overturn at the slightest movement. He would then have gone on to prove circumstantially that there was no other place where the pail could have been set, that if the brush had been longer it could not have been used at all, and for all this he would have such solid reasons that he would completely

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convince us. For, although it persistently reminds one of the knock-about comedian and the circus, his humour is also founded on the most grave and sound reasoning.

The form which Kafka's imagination takes most often is then that of comedy; but the originality of this comedy lies in its union with the deepest seriousness. K.'s predicaments are not only absurd; they are also desperate. The letter from the Castle telling him not to slacken in his efforts and carry on his work to a fortunate conclusion really represents a crushing defeat. The passage which follows is a good example of the way in which Kafka can combine broad comic effects with a sense of disaster.

K. only looked up from the letter when the assistants, who read far more slowly than he, gave three loud cheers at the good news and waved their lanterns. 'Be quiet,' he said, and to Barnabas. 'There's been a misunderstanding.' Barnabas did not seem to comprehend. 'There's been a misunderstanding,' K. repeated, and the weariness he had felt in the afternoon came over him again, the road to the schoolhouse seemed very long, and behind Barnabas he could see his whole family, and the assistants were still jostling him so closely that he had to drive them away with his elbows. . . . He could quite well have found his own way home, and better alone, indeed, than in this company. And to make matters worse one of them

had wound a scarf round his neck whose free ends flapped in the wind and had several times been flung against K.'s face; it is true, the other assistant had always disengaged the scarf at once with his long, pointed, perpetually mobile fingers, but that had not made things any better. Both of them seemed to consider it an actual pleasure to be out, and the wind and the wildness of the night threw them into raptures. 'Get out!' shouted K. 'Seeing you've come to meet me, why haven't you brought my stick? What have I now to drive you home with?' They crouched behind Barnabas, but they were not too frightened to set their lanterns on their protector's shoulders, right and left; however, he shook them off at once. 'Barnabas,' said K., and he felt a weight on his heart when he saw that Barnabas obviously did not understand him, that though his tunic shone beautifully while all was going well, when things became serious no help was to be found in him, but only dumb opposition, opposition against which one could not fight, for Barnabas himself was helpless, he could only smile, and that was of just as little help as the stars up there against this tempest down below. 'Look what Klammm has written!' said K., holding the letter before his face. 'He has been wrongly informed. I haven't done any surveying at all, and you see yourself how much the assistants are worth. And obviously too I can't interrupt work which I've

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never begun; I can't even excite the gentleman's displeasure, so how can I have earned his appreciation? As for being easy in my mind, I can never be that.' 'I'll see to it,' said Barnabas, who all the time had been gazing past the letter, which he could not have read in any case, for he was holding it too close to his face. 'Oh,' said K., 'you promise me that you'll see to it, but can I really believe you? I'm in need of a trustworthy messenger, now more than ever.'

While this conversation was going on the assistants had 'kept on slowly raising their heads by turns behind Barnabas's shoulders as from a trap-door, and hastily disappearing again with a soft whistle in imitation of the whistling of the wind, as if they were terrified of K.; they enjoyed themselves like this for a long time'.

It is a situation made up of a number of great and small touches, serious and comic, but all, down to the last purely music-hall one, exquisitely just, and deepening by their apparent irrelevance our sense of the gravity of the defeat K. has sustained. The scene is viewed from every side, and seized simultaneously by all the faculties of the writer's mind operating in conjunction at a uniform intensity. It is objective in the only sense one can apply the word to a work of imagination: in the balance achieved by an intense employment of all the requisite powers of the writer.

As pure imaginative creations, K.'s

scenes have this packed fullness which gives them simultaneously several meanings, one concealed beneath the other, until in a trivial or commonplace situation we find an image of some universal or mythical event such as the Fall of Man. It is in this way that Kafka's allegory works. He has been blamed for confusing two worlds; for introducing real people, living in real houses, walking through real streets, working in offices, going about earthly vocations, and then by a sudden twist making all their actions symbolical and bringing them into actual contact with emblematical figures. The answer is that this was obviously the thing he was trying to do. He was not interested in pure allegory; it could not have expressed his conception of life or his idea of man's actual moral problem. His hero does not have to walk a beaten though admittedly difficult road like Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, overcoming certain set dangers, refusing certain traditional temptations, and after each victory drawing nearer to his goal. Kafka did not deny that this road existed; but he found it almost impossible to recognize. The way K. has to take is the right way on this earth, which, in the words of the aphorism I have already quoted, is stretched 'just above the ground' and 'seems more designed to make people stumble than to be walked upon'. There are many sign-posts along it, but the difficulty is that they never mean what they say. One may actually be going in the wrong direction. One's

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ostensible victories may turn out to be defeats, while an occasional aberration may have very fortunate results: here once more we find the incommensurability of divine and human law. The strength of *The Pilgrim's Progress* lies in its directness and simplicity; it shows Christian resolutely treading out the scheme of salvation in a purely allegorical landscape.

Kafka quite clearly accepted a plan of salvation which was not so very unlike Bunyan's. But what essentially concerned him was how man could walk the way of salvation in this present confused and deceptive life, where 'there are countless places of refuge' but 'only one place of salvation', and where accordingly 'the possibilities of salvation . . . are as numerous as the places of refuge'. It is not that he did not believe in the fundamental certainties of religion, divine justice, divine grace, damnation and salvation; for they are the very framework of the world of his imagination. The problem of which all his stories are the direct imaginative statement is how man, stationed in one dimension, can direct his life in accordance with a law belonging to another, a law whose workings he can never interpret truly, though they are always manifest to him.

IV

The mixture of realism and allegory which is Kafka's peculiar invention is accordingly perhaps the most economical and effective means

that could have been found for expressing his vision of life. It is also a unique weapon of inquiry into the workings of Providence. Bunyan's allegory, though full of psychological truth, has this weakness, that it is incidentally a kind of demonstration; it provides a model for imitation by the evangelical Christian. Kafka's allegory, on the other hand, is an investigation into an endlessly intricate world, an investigation that is urgent and dramatic, for on its outcome may depend the hero's salvation. He does not question the justice of that world, for compared with divine law, even when it appears most unjust in our eyes, he held that all human effort, no matter how noble, was in the wrong. But though he did not question it he penetrated into its infinite mazes as no other modern writer has done. *The Castle* is a picture on a scale never attempted since the seventeenth century of the relation to God of the soul seeking salvation. Kafka enters into all the intricacies of that relation with a psychological penetration and thoroughness as great as Proust devoted to the relations between human beings. To the stages in it, moreover, he gives plastic form; they are incarnated in figures, scenes, situations, all of which have the most convincing reality. His thought in itself is endlessly subtle, but perfectly solid at the same time; for he never lost, while pursuing it into its most remote recesses, his centre of reference, which was the reality of religious truth. Thus, at the heart of his work is a great, simple, yet endless thought, and all his

Edwin Muir

writings are a working of it out by the light of human understanding. The attempt took him into stranger places than have been touched by any other modern novelist or psychologist, and there are scenes in his two greatest books which, though evoked with complete objectivity, are almost impossible to understand, and seem to belong to an unknown world of experience. Yet we never doubt their reality. A German critic has said finely that Kafka has a power of deducing the more real from the real, of starting from some concrete situation and sinking his thought into something which gives the impression of being still more concrete. It is this extraordinary substantiality, this sense of the almost oppressive solidity of every object, which gives his stories their strange and sometimes frightening atmosphere. His world is a sort of underground world where we feel that the force of gravity and the weight and mass of every object are far greater than in the ordinary world of the upper air. It is a world in which life itself becomes denser, and where accordingly it is almost natural for immaterial forces to assume palpable shapes. It is an image of what the actual world might be if it were subjected to some process of condensation by means of which the invisible agencies that environ man, hopes and fears, devils and angels, are forced to contract and solidify, peopling a scene which before man thought he had to himself. This probably explains the peculiarly charged and overcrowded atmosphere

that fills *The Castle* and *The Trial*, giving the sensation that the hero has scarcely room to move or even to breathe. It is a nightmare atmosphere irradiated by gleams of the purest humour.

Perhaps, then, the most extraordinary thing in *The Castle* is the solidity of the metaphysical world it builds up. Throughout, the imagination follows the thought with such closeness that it is hard to say where the one ends and the other begins. Every detail is exactly worked out, yet has the shock of a discovery. The style is as plain and natural as Swift's, but it has an endless variety of inflection, and is capable of expressing with enchanting ease the subtlest shades of meaning. It can convey an overwhelming sense of approaching disaster by two simple sentences such as: 'K. stepped out into the windswept street and peered into the darkness. Wild, wild weather.' It can be exquisitely simple: 'She drew her hand away from K., sat erect opposite him and wept without hiding her face; she held up her tear-covered face to him as if she were not weeping for herself and so had nothing to hide, but as if she were weeping for K.'s treachery and so the pain of seeing her tears was his due.' Kafka's style, simple and beautiful, was, like his peculiar kind of allegory, only the best means for the end he had in mind. His two great stories are marvellous constructions of thought and imagination working in unison, and they were made possible by his ability to say with absolute precision whatever he had to say. He was a great imaginative thinker, but a perfect artist.

Valediction:

An Eclogue by Louis MacNeice

THEIR verdure dare not show . . . their verdure dare not show . .
Cant and randy — the seals' heads bobbing in the tide flow
Between the islands, sleek and black and irrelevant
They cannot depose logically what they want:
Died by gunshot under borrowed pennons
Sniped from the wet gorse and taken by the limp fins
And slung like a dead seal in a boghole, beaten up
By peasants with long lips and the whisky-drinker's cough.
Park your car in the city of Dublin, see Sackville Street
Without the sandbags in the old photos, meet
The statues of the patriots, history never dies
At any rate in Ireland, arson and murder are legacies
Like old rings hollow-eyed without their stones
Dumb talismans.

See Belfast, devout and profane and hard,
Built on reclaimed mud, hammers playing in the ship yard,
Time punched with holes like a steel sheet, time
Hardening the faces, veneering with a grey and speckled rime
The faces under the shawls and caps:
This was my mother-city, these my paps.
Country of callous lava cooled to stone,
Of minute sodden haycocks, of ship-sirens' moan
Of falling intonations — I would call you to book
I would say to you, Look,
I would say, This is what you have given me
Indifference and sentimentality
A metallic giggle, a fumbling hand
A heart that leaps to a fife-band:
Set these against your water-shafted air
Of amethyst and moonstone, the horses' feet like bells of hair
Shambling beneath the orange cart, the beer-brown spring
Guzzling between the heather, the green gush of Irish spring.

Louis MacNeice

Curséd be he that curses his mother, I cannot be
Anyone else than what this land engendered me
In the back of my mind are snips of white the sails
Of the Lough's fishing-boats, the bell-ropes lash their tails
When I would peal my thoughts, the bells pull free —
Memory in apostasy.
I would tot up my factors
But who can stand in the way of his soul's steam-tractors?
I can say Ireland is hooey Ireland is
A gallery of fake tapestries
But I cannot deny my past to which my self is wed,
The woven figure cannot undo its thread.
On a cardboard lid I saw when I was four
Was the trademark of a hound and a round tower
And that was Irish glamour, and in the cemetery
Sham Celtic crosses claimed our individuality,
And my father talked about the West where years back
He played hurley on the sands with a stick of wrack.
Park your car in Killarney, buy a souvenir
Of green marble or black bog-oak, run up to Clare
Climb the cliff in the postcard, visit Galway city
Romanticize on our Spanish blood, leave ten per cent of pity
Under your plate for the emigrant
Take credit for our sanctity, our heroism and our sterile want
Columba Kevin and briny Brandan the accepted names
Wolfe Tone and Grattan and Michael Collins the accepted names
Admire the suavity with which the architect
Is rebuilding the burnt mansion, recollect
The palmy days of the Horse Show, swank your fill
But take the Holyhead boat before you pay the bill;
Before you face the consequence
Of inbred soul and climatic maleficence
And pay for the trick beauty of a prism
In drug-dull fatalism.
I will exorcise my blood
And, not to have my baby-clothes my shroud,
I will acquire an attitude not yours
And become as one of your holiday visitors

Valediction

And however often I may come
Farewell, my country, and in perpetuum;
Whatever desire I catch when your wind scours my face
I will take home and put in a glass case
And merely look on
At each new fantasy of badge and gun.
Frost will not touch the hedge of fuchsias
The land will remain as it was
But no abiding content can grow out of these minds
Fuddled with blood, always caught by blinds;
The eels go up the Shannon over the great dam
You cannot change a response by giving it a new name.

Fountain of green and blue curling in the wind,
I must go east and stay, not looking behind
Not knowing on which day the mist is blanket-thick
Nor when sun quilts the valley and quick
Winging shadows of white clouds pass
Over the long hills like a fiddle's phrase.
If I were a dog of sunlight I would bound
From Phoenix Park to Achill Sound
Picking up the scent of a hundred fugitives
That have broken the mesh of ordinary lives,
But being ordinary too I must in course discuss
What we mean to Ireland or Ireland to us,
I have to observe milestone and curio
The beaten buried gold of an old king's bravado
Falsetto antiquities, I have to gesture
Take part in, or renounce, each imposture;
Therefore I resign, good-bye the chequered and the quiet hills
The gaudily-striped Atlantic, the linen-mills
That swallow the shawled file, the black moor, where half
A turfstack stands like a ruined cenotaph;
Good-bye your hens running in and out of the white house
Your absent-minded goats along the road, your black cows
Your greyhounds and your hunters beautifully bred
Your drums and your dolled-up Virgins and your ignorant dead.

Anstey

by Douglas Woodruff

I

IT is regrettable that while so many writers early achieve the convenience of a collected edition and can be commanded in neat uniform three- and sixpenny size, Anstey must still be sought in the second-hand bookshops. Some half-dozen of his better-known works are to be had in cheap editions, but the bulk of his twenty-five volumes are only to be collected in as odd an assortment of old editions as any author can have left behind him. It is not that publishers are at fault. When an Omnibus volume of Anstey was produced a few years ago, under the title of *Humour and Fantasy*, it received much literary encouragement and was adopted by the Book Society as the choice for its members. But the volume failed to find any general appreciation. There is a feeling that stories in which magic stones are rubbed with astonishing results are not stories anyone can be expected to enjoy to-day. Fifty years or so ago, people say, there was less sophistication. A reputation for wit could still be obtained by punning, and Gilbert and Burnand could make play upon words which any modern humorous

writer of any standing would instinctively avoid. The plots of the Sherlock Holmes stories are incredibly jejune and thin, often consisting in no more than the following-up of a clue through three or four journeys which arise out of each other; yet they were breathless successes in their day, and their manner of telling has made them a permanent part of our literature.

Certain kinds of writing date particularly quickly. Among the few tales written in the 'eighties and 'nineties which are still fresh to-day, Anstey can claim one representative, *Vice Versa*. But the successful formula which he so often used after that initial success, the application of magic to ordinary humdrum lives, is to-day the very thing which obscures his distinction as a man of letters. It is hard to say why the revulsion among younger readers to-day should be so sharp. Undoubtedly Victorian magic has about it a creaking simplicity reminiscent of coloured peep-shows and mechanical pantomime devices. The success of *Alf's Button* showed that there is still a public which does not feel bored at the idea of magic transforma-

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tions, but it is not a public vocal on literary matters. Among habitual book-readers the fantastic to-day is expected to be scientific and prophetic, extended towards the future or delicately whimsical. To confront a stolid butler with a Jinn is not done; or if it is, people are not amused.

So the year of Anstey's death finds him in an eclipse which has already lasted for a long time. Yet he had literary qualities which made his books among the most re-readable in the language. The magical plot was only his device for displaying character in predicament, and his greatest strength lay in the subtle observation of character and in the mastery of the phrases by which character reveals itself. It is what the figures in his books say that remains in the mind, the rotund hypocrisies of Dr. Grimstone, the inflated commonplaces of Paul Bultitude, the vain pedantries of Professor Futvoye. You feel that Anstey himself was enjoying his writing most when he was framing solemn, self-revealing sentences for his characters to speak. The whole of that superb book *Only Toys* is a succession of interviews, in which every kind of ludicrous pretence and baseness is disclosed by what the toys say. The excitement, for Anstey, in confronting a barber with Venus or Tourmalin with power over time lies in the conversations to which the unprecedented circumstances will give rise. He waits, pencil in hand, to take it down. There have to be characters in his stories – young heroines in particular – from whom he cannot hope for very entertaining

observations, and they are markedly shadowy.

It is his preoccupation with character as revealed by utterance which explains what is otherwise a paradox, that the master of the far-fetched and unreal was also the most acute of social commentators. *Voces Populi* remains a capital document for the social historian of the pre-war era. The habit of wandering unobtrusively wherever crowds gather, at restaurants, art galleries, exhibitions, in Hyde Park, at a football match, was one which Anstey pursued for its own sake, as a form of sport. He went angling for rich remarks as other men wait for fish, and when he had been rewarded he displayed his catch with affectionate delight. He was fond of telling of the landladies behind whom he sat at *Hamlet*. She who had stood the treat asked her friend how she liked it, and the answer came 'Very well, dearie. But you know it's not what I call a deep play!' He cherished, too, a remark uttered in deep disdain during the war by a man in the street outside a house where a piano was being played after an air-raid warning – 'Playing the piano, and "take cover" sounded!' He would much rather discover and report than invent, and he took the greatest pains with his *Voces Populi* dialogues, where other men with his facility would have invented most of it at home. This fidelity to fact, this well-grounded faith that his fellow-creatures would not let him down, but would show themselves constantly capable of the most gorgeous rubbish

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made him a most restrained writer of fiction. He was in the tradition of *Gulliver's Travels*, in that, once the great assumption had been made, he worked out his tale with most circumstantial realism and everybody talked and acted in the most natural manner possible.

As a serious novelist, in the *Giant's Robe* and the *Pariah*, he was interested in demonstrating character in increasing predicament. *The Pariah* is a painful book, a cumulatively depressing tragedy of manners. There is a commonplaceness about the characters, about Margot and the Chevening family and Joshua Chadwick and Nugent Orme and the Pariah himself, which prevents any of them from becoming considerable creations. The total effect of the book is like being present at a motor accident to strangers, a tragic business in itself, and not from the injury to cherished individuals. Anstey was not a preacher, and although good and evil are suitably rewarded in his humorous work, it is a conventional business. He is not there to point morals, even in *Vice Versa* where the subtitle is *A Lesson to Fathers*, not to talk humbug about happy schooldays, and in the tales for children where morals are expected, Anstey is not a satirist of evil or folly but a peep-show man inviting everyone to come and take a look. Perhaps if he had been a little more avowedly satirical he would be less neglected to-day. People would say, with great truth, that his pages were social documents instead of leaving them alone and imagining them to

be pages where uninteresting paste-board figures are precipitated into conjurors' dilemmas. Where Anstey was a deliberate satirist, as in his parodies of the old Music Hall or of Ibsen, his work was particularly effective because of his restraint. His Young Reciters' recitations are barely distinguishable from those in books put seriously on the market. His pocket Ibsen is the only thing of the kind he did. It came naturally to him to throw his stone at the new priggishness of the Ibsen drama. He was attacking a very real enemy, for nothing did more to kill plays of the kind Anstey could write, *The Man from Blankley's* type of comedy, than the vanity which took hold of the play-going public after Ibsen had come along and taught them to expect the delineation of emotional crisis, and to sit in theatre-seats for a vicarious examination of conscience.

II

Anstey's modesty, if it prevented him from being classified as a satirist, enabled him to outlive his vogue with complete composure. The humorist who ceases to raise laughs has not the consolations which other writers can invoke and cannot talk about writing for the few or for posterity. Anstey was content to have had a remarkably good innings, to have been in his day, and in his unassuming way, a successful man, not surprised if younger generations ignored his books, quietly pleased if they did not. Writing has a tendency to make men vain, and the old writer,

Anstey

self-centred and querulous at eclipse is a common and painful sight – Ireland has sent us some notorious instances – so that Anstey in his seventies, gaily aware that most people imagined he was dead, was excellent no less for what he was than for what he might so easily have been and was not. He had no sort of grudge against the American public for never discovering him. Only two or three of his books were ever brought out in America. Yet he might so easily and justly have enjoyed an American vogue, beginning as such vogues do many years after the first appearance of the book in this country. It may yet come. Recent reports from the United States say that the Americans have discovered a new English humorist of the name of Burnand.

The great fame of *Vice Versa* which came when its author was only twenty-six proved an embarrassment and caused the signature 'F. Anstey' to be regarded as a hallmark of rich humour. Many people assumed not unnaturally from the title and the author's name, that the *Giant's Robe* was another riot of comic absurdity. So it was that fourteen years later, when Anstey wrote *The Statement of Stella Maberley*, he published it anonymously. It is a remarkable book, telling in the first person the story of a girl Stella and her friend Evelyn. Stella is so devoted to Evelyn that she cannot bear the thought of Evelyn marrying, and when Hugh Dallas appears her jealousy is doubled because she falls in love with him herself. She resents the attempts which

Evelyn makes to discuss Hugh Dallas and to soften her attitude of cold dislike towards him. The truth is that it is Stella with whom Hugh is in love, and Evelyn is trying to bring them together; but Stella in her ignorance of this, and in an overwrought state, gives Evelyn a large dose of chloral, knowing full well that Evelyn's heart is weak.

So far the story is conventional enough, and the plot might belong to a serial in a daily paper. But then Anstey takes his own bold line. Stella is distracted on finding that she has been the cause of her friend's death, and prays God to return her to life. The dead figure stirs and life returns. Only gradually, by the heaping up of little incidents does Stella come to learn the appalling truth. It is not Evelyn who has returned to life, but a malignant spirit which has possessed itself of Evelyn's body, and delights to torture Stella, stealing Hugh from her, marrying and destroying him. The same matter-of-factness and easy narrative which enabled Anstey to carry through his bold humorous fantasies serves him equally well in this grim field. *The Statement of Stella Maberley* went into two editions, and on the second Anstey put his name, but it is a book an enterprising publisher might find it repaid him to re-issue to-day

The serious work, though there is not very much of it, is sufficient to demonstrate the wide literary capacity which Anstey commanded. He did not shirk the most difficult situations and

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scenes, and he could have been a more considerable novelist if he had been a little less engagingly free from pomposity and pulpit manners and a solemn view of the writer's duty to instruct and uplift. He was content to make his generation laugh, and in that decent ambition he had the highest measure of success. *Vice Versa* not only reached an enormous public, it held its admirers. It is a book which people read over and over again. As a play it never touched the same heights, because the excellence is as much in the telling as in the idea. Crichton House School has a universal quality and every man recognizes in it features sharply remembered from his own school days. It has now lived for fifty years, with its gaunt gymnastic apparatus standing

out in the evening from the playground, its bare little dormitories, its long dining-room and disappointing fare, its inadequate and eccentric assistant and visiting masters, and it stays etched in the memory together with the tremendous reverberating sentiments of its proprietor and headmaster, who is seen all the time from below. In the obituary appreciations in *The Times*, the original of Dr. Grimstone was claimed for a Highgate schoolmaster, while the names of the boys were said to have been collected from shop fronts in the Edgware Road. The actual school, Anstey once admitted, was at Surbiton and is now an hotel or boarding-house. Few buildings have a stronger claim to a commemorative plaque.

A Forced Landing

by Villiers David

THE carburettor choked, and the hoarse singing ceased;
Peace orbed in crystal the high hung aeroplane.
But lightning licks of fear flick the poised flyer;
This cease-of-sound, this all-peace shake him like shell-fire.
For the hoarse humming bird, the bee-swarm-throated,
Her tongue of music torn out of her,
Clothes her spread wings with immediate menace.
The fabulous phoenix staggers in her course.
Losing her bird-loveliness at once,
Her azured dreaming, drops with a bomb's danger.

He thrusts her nose down, scans for drifting smoke,
And for that gleaming fragment of green grassland
No cattle trail on and no trenches guard,
Untrod by pylons wearing death in their hair.
The creased patch-work landscape taunts his hunting eyes;
Black lands are Bannockburns, plough-tangling snares;
Fields, velvet-best for dancing on the green,
Are pinned to swollen slopes, or they are
Narrow carpets unrolled across the wind.

This is the last bank, this side-slip is the last,
Indifferently the earth reels up, and trees
Thick set the furrows, combed heads in crowns of thorns.
The flesh of the land is scarred with country lanes,
Braided with rivers, red with clustered roofs.
This is his field.
o wind, o flying wheels,
o wings sinking so fast out of the sun.
No legendary bird lights here for welcome,
Bringing upon its back a happy master.

Villiers David

Tangled in wires, hiding between the trees,
She trips, tips, shaking her frailty-giant wings,
And the propeller, fluttering like a heart,
Shivers upon the ground;
He lies dead.
Then from the throat, that once harsh music stored,
Bursts a hoarse triumph of music one last time:
This is the paeon of fire.

A Wartime Schooling

by Elizabeth Bowen

THE house with a shallow front lawn, swagged in July with Dorothy Perkins roses, stood back from a tarmac road outside the Kentish village of Downe. The main block, three stories high, had a white pillared portico and a dado of ivy, looking friendly and undistinguished. It contained classrooms and bedrooms for about sixty girls, the staff study and the dining room. To the left facing the porch (as we seldom had time to do) was a stable-yard, to the right, a warren of painted iron buildings – gymnasium, music-rooms, wash-rooms – twisted off at an angle, parallel with the road. A low trellis of ivy concealed these windows.

The back of the house, one portion curving out in a deep bay, faced a lawn flanked each side by heavily treed

paths, tunnels in summer. A bed of azaleas outside the senior study french window made the summer term exotic. Features of this lawn landscape were an old mulberry tree with an iron belt and a mound with a large ilex, backed by evergreen shrubs, on which Shakespeare plays were acted. It was usual during rehearsals to pluck and chew the leaves of the ilex tree. We girls were forever masticating some foreign substance, leaves of any kind, grass from the playing fields, paper, india rubber, splinters from pencil-ends or the hems of handkerchiefs. In the course of my three years at school both the ilex and mulberry trees took on an emotional significance; under the mulberry a friend whose brother at that time captained the Winchester eleven, and who was herself our only overhand bowler, criticized my behaviour on an

A Wartime Schooling

occasion, saying I had done something that was not cricket. The lawn gave on a meadow crossed by a path to the playing field: beyond the school boundary, meadows and copses rolled off into Kent pleasantly. In summer there was a great smell of hay. I remember also one June a cuckoo that used to flap round the school roof, stout, squawking and losing its mystery. It has taken years for me to reinstate cuckoos. The Cudham valley was said to be a great place for nightingales, but we girls can never have walked there at the right time. . . . From across country, features of this rather odd and imposing back view of the house were its very white window-frames, a glass veranda on to which the drawing-room debouched and a modern addition, one side, in the form of kind of chalet, from whose balcony I played Jezebel with a friend's teddy bear.

The survival of such childish inanimate pets was encouraged by fashion; several dormitory beds with their glacial white quilts were encumbered all day and shared nightly with rubbed threadbare teddy bears, monkeys or in one case a blue plush elephant. Possibly this seemed a good way to travesty sentiment: we cannot really have been idiotic girls. A friend of mine wore a carved ivory Chinese dog round her neck on a gold cord for some days, then she was asked to wear this inside her djibbah. A good deal of innocent fetishism came to surround these animals; the mistress of the blue elephant use to walk the passages

saying: 'You must kiss my elephant.' Photos of relatives, sometimes quite distant but chosen for their good appearance, the drawings of Dulac, Medici prints and portraits of Napoleon, Charles I, Rupert Brooke, Sir Roger Casement or Mozart lent advertising touches of personality to each cubicle's walls, slung on threads from the frieze-rail and flapping and tapping in an almost constant high wind from the open windows. The ever difficult business of getting oneself across was most pressing of all at this age: restricted possessions, a uniform dictated down to the last detail and a self-imposed but rigid emotional snobbishness shutting the more direct means of self-expression away. Foibles, mannerisms we therefore exaggerated most diligently.

If anyone said 'You are always so such-and-such' one felt one had formed a new intimacy and made one's mark. A good many young women were led to buffoon themselves. It seemed fatal not to be at least one thing to excess, and if I could not be outstandingly good at a thing I preferred to be outstandingly bad at it. Personality came out in patches, like damp through a wall.

The dormitories were called bedrooms, and we had little opinion of schools where the bedrooms were called dormitories. Ours were in fact the bedrooms of a fair-sized country house, divided into from four to six cubicles. The window cubicles went to the best people, who were sometimes terribly cold at nights; the door cubicle went

Elizabeth Bowen

to the youngest inhabitant, who could hold everyone up if her sense of decency were over-acute. 'You *can't* come through' she would shout; 'I am indecent.' The niceties of curtain-drawing and of intrusion varied from bedroom to bedroom, according to temper, but we always closed our curtains to say our prayers. No embarrassment surrounded the saying of prayers at this school; in fact it would have been more embarrassing to have left them unsaid. Whom one sleeps with is always rather important, and ill-assorted companions could cast a gloom over the term. There was always one rather quiet girl who patently wished herself elsewhere, lurked a good deal behind her curtains and was afraid to speak. As in a railway carriage, one generally disliked one's companions less after some time. The tone of a bedroom would be, of course, set by the noisiest girl, who talked most freely about her private affairs. As one began to realize that bedroom lists for a term were drawn up on a psychological basis, the whole thing became more interesting. Great friends were not put together and we were not allowed into each other's bedrooms, but it was always possible to stand and talk in the door, with one toe outside. Assignations for serious or emotional talks connected themselves with the filling of hot water bottles and water cans at a tap outside the bathrooms, when one was otherwise ready for bed. Girls of a roving disposition with a talent for intimacy were always about this passage. A radiator opposite this tap was

in demand in winter; one could lean while one talked and warm the spine through the dressing-gown. The passage was dim-lit, with wobbly gas brackets, and it was always exciting to see who had got there first. The radiator was near the headmistress's door, and she would disperse any group she came out and found. It irritated her to see us being girlish in any way. We cannot really have been emotional girls; we were not highly sexed and any attractions had an aesthetic, snobbish, self-interested tinge. Conversations over the radiator were generally about art, Roman Catholicism, suicide, or how impossible somebody else had been. At nine o'clock a bell rang from the matron's room and we all darted back to our bedrooms and said our prayers.

I first went to this school in September 1914. We unpacked our trunks in a cement passage outside the gymnasium and carried our things upstairs. The school must have re-assembled with an elating sense of emergency, but as I was new I was not conscious of this. Everything seemed so odd that the war was dwarfed, and though one had been made to feel that one was now living in history, one's own biography was naturally more interesting. I found my schoolfellows rather terse and peremptory, their snubbing of me had a kind of nobility: whether this arose from the war's or my own newness I did not ask; as I had been told that this was a very good school it was what I had been led to expect. A squad of troops marching

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past in the dark on the tarmac road, whistling, pointed the headmistress's address to us in the gymnasium that first night of term. Wind kept flapping the window cords on their pulleys, the gas jets whistled and the girls drawn up by forms in resolute attitudes looked rather grim. The headmistress stated that it did not matter if we were happy so long as we were good. At my former school the headmistress had always said she knew we should be good as long as we were happy. That sounded sunnier. But in my three years at this school I learnt to define happiness as a kind of inner irrational exaltation having little to do with morals one way or the other. That night in the gymnasium I felt some apprehension that my character was to be lopped, or even forcibly moulded, in this place, but this came to be dispelled as the term wore on. The war having well outlasted my school-days, I cannot imagine a girls' school without a war. The moral stress was appalling. We grew up under the intolerable obligation of being fought for, and could not fall short in character without recollecting that men were dying for us. During my second year, the *Daily Mail* came out with its headline about food-hogs, and it became impossible to eat as much as one wished, which was to over-eat, without self-consciousness. If the acutest food shortage had already set in, which it had not, meals would really have been easier. As it was, we *could* over-eat, but it became unfeeling to do so. The war dwarfed us and made us morally

uncomfortable, and we could see no reason why it should ever stop. It was clear, however, that someone must have desired it, or it would not have begun. In my first term, we acted a pageant representing the Allies for the headmistress's birthday, and later sang songs of the epoch, such as 'We don't want to lose you, but——' at a concert in the village, in our white muslin Saturday evening frocks. Most eligible fighters had, however, by this time gone to the war and we can only have made their relatives more hysterical. An excellent bun supper was provided by the village committee, and some of us over-ate.

I do not remember ever discussing the war among ourselves at school. Possibly some of the girls may have done so, but I had a sense of inferiority owing to having no brothers and not taking in a daily paper. Though, seated beside one of the staff at meals one would say: 'Aren't the French doing splendidly?' or 'Isn't it awful about the Russians?' The Danish music mistress, however, had melancholia and we were not allowed to mention the war at her table. I do not think it was so much the war that made her melancholic as her unhappy friendship with the violin mistress; any attempt to make conversation with her was the last straw. She looked extraordinarily like Hamlet, and as she was a neutral I always resented her taking up this attitude about the war. . . . If a girl's brother were killed or wounded we were all too much embarrassed to speak of it. Though death became familiar, it never became less awkward:

Elizabeth Bowen

if heroic feeling ran low in us I think this was because the whole world's behaviour seemed to be travestying our own: everywhere, everyone was behaving as we were all, at our ages, most anxious not to behave. Things were being written and said constantly that would have damned any one of us: the world seemed to be bound up in a tragic attack of adolescence and there seemed no reason why we should ever grow up, since moderation in behaviour became impossible. So we became in contradistinction violently precious, martyred by our own good taste. Our morbidity was ingrowing. I cannot, either, remember discussing men. Possibly the whole sex had gloomy associations. One or two of the girls fell in love in the holidays, but something in the atmosphere made it impossible to talk of this naturally without seeming at once to make copy of it. All the same, I and my friends all intended to marry early, partly because this appeared an achievement or way of making one's mark, also from a feeling it would be difficult to settle to anything else until this was done. (Like passing the School Certificate). Few of my friends anticipated maternity with either interest or pleasure, and though some have since become mothers it still seems inappropriate. Possibly, however, we were not natural girls. We may have discussed love, but I do not remember how. The future remained very hazy and insecure. We were not ambitious girls, though we all expected to distinguish ourselves in some way. Not one of us intended to be L.O.P.H. (Left

On Pa's Hands). We lived, however, intensively in the present; when the present became over-powering there was an attic-loft over the bedroom ceilings in the main buildings, with sacks and a cistern in it, where an enterprising person could go and weep. Less fastidious people wept in their cubicles.

We were not in love with each other at all continuously, or, as far as I know, with the staff at all. A certain amount of emotion banked up in the holidays, when letters became important. During the school day we all looked violently plain: school uniform, even djibbabs, cannot expect to suit everyone; red wrists stuck out of our cuffs and our hair (short hair was not at that time the prevailing fashion) was so skinned back that our eyes would hardly shut. After games we charged indoors, stripped, rubbed down, put on stays and private clothes, released our front hair and became a little more personable. On Saturday nights, in modified evening dresses, quite a certain amount of glamour set in. In the week, curvilinear good looks were naturally at a discount and a swaggering, nonchalant air cut the most ice. If you were not good at games the best way of creating an atmosphere was to be good at acting. We acted a good deal. On Saturday afternoons, one or two people who could play the piano emotionally had séances in the music rooms. All this was the best we could put up in the way of romance. All the same, one or two people contrived to keep diaries, moon round the garden alone and be quite unhappy.

A Wartime Schooling

Competitive sociability and team spirit were rather well united at my school by the custom of picking up tables. The first day of term seven seniors shut themselves up and, by rotative bidding, each picked up from the rest of the school a team of about eight for her table at meals. Each team moved round each week to the next of the seven dining-room tables, each table presided over by one of the staff. The object of each team was to make the most conversation possible, and to be a success: girls were therefore picked with a view to chattiness, desirability, tact, table manners, resource and charm. Certain unfortunate girls were never in demand, and the screams of seniors repudiating them could sometimes be heard from the other end of the garden. It was a great thing to be at the head of the most patently animated table in the dining-room. Many of us have grown up to be good hostesses. If a girl sat just eating on without saying anything the head of the table would kick at her, if within reach. So that young nervous girls got into a way of saying almost anything. The great thing was to amuse the mistress whose table it was, and keep her smiling constantly: each girl had to take it in turns to do this. There was a French table and a German table: the games mistress was usually difficult to talk to. The head-mistress sometimes received our remarks with irony, and was inclined to say 'Quite. . . .' The table rule bound us only for breakfast and dinner; at tea and supper we sat with whom we

liked, few of the staff were present and very merry we were. Quarrels, if any, sometimes occurred at this time.

The other great social occasion was Saturday evening (as I have said). We danced (we thought) rather glamorously in the gymnasium to a piano, and dances were often booked up some days ahead. On summer Saturday evenings we walked round the garden between dances, feeling unlike ourselves. The garden was long, with lime trees and apple trees and long grass with cuckoo flowers in it: it looked very beautiful in the late evening light, with the sound of the piano coming out through the gymnasium door. On winter Saturday evenings we danced more heartily, in order to keep warm. The staff filed in in evening dresses and sat on a platform, watching the dancing, and occasionally being asked to dance, with expressions of animation which, now that I look back, command my respect.

Lessons must have occupied a good deal of our time, but I remember very little of this. What I learnt seems to have been absorbed into my system, which shows how well taught I was. I used to sit rivetting, or trying to rivet, the mistress's eye, but must otherwise have been pretty passive. I spent an inordinate amount of time over the preparation for some lessons; the rest of my preparation time went by in reading poetry or the Bible or looking up more about the facts of life in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. We were morbidly honourable girls and never spoke to each other at preparation or in our

Elizabeth Bowen

bedrooms after the lights were out. I often wonder whether in after life one has not suffered from an overstrained honour from having been too constantly put upon it in youth, and whether the espionage one hears of in foreign schools might not have kept one's sense of delinquency more enduringly active. In these ways, we were almost too good to last. We did not pass notes either, though one of my friends, just back from a day in London, once wrote on the margin of her rough note book, and pushed across to me, that Kitchener had been drowned. Perhaps the occasion may have excused the breach. I simply thought, however, that she was pulling my leg. . . . Games were compulsory and took up the afternoon: it did not matter being bad at them so long as you showed energy. At lacrosse, girls who could run would pound up and down the field; those who could not gripped their crosses fiercely and stalked about. Lacrosse is such a fierce game that I wonder we all lived through it. Hockey, though ungainly, is not nearly so perilous. The only real farce was cricket, a humiliating performance for almost all. I never thought worse of anyone for being good at games so long as she was not unattractive in other ways; one or two of the games committee had, however, an air of having no nonsense about them that was depressing. We were anything but apathetic about matches: when a match was played away the returning team would, if victorious, begin to cheer at a given turn of the road; we all sat with

straining ears; if the charabanc rolled up in silence we knew the worst. Our team so often won that I should like to think we had given them moral support.

The literary society was presided over by the headmistress, of whom I should like to place it on grateful record that she did definitely teach me how not to write. There were gardens to garden in, if you had nothing more personal to do in your spare time, and, because of the war, there was hay-making in season. Two or three of the girls who had formed the idea that they wished to be engineers in after life spent a good deal of time looking in through the windows of the engine room at the light plant and water-pumping machine; sometimes they were let in by the geography mistress to help her oil the thing. The geography mistress was a Pole, who had built the chapel as well as all the other modern additions to the school. The chapel was put up during my second year and dedicated by the Bishop of Rochester: a friend of mine pointed out to me during the service that the Bishop's sleeves were not white but of very pale pink lawn, and I have had no opportunity since to correct this impression: perhaps it was not incorrect. The chapel was approached by a dark, draughty and rather impressive arcade from the gymnasium. There were no cases of religious mania or any other obsession while I was at school.

Seeing *Madchen in Uniform*, and reading more sensitive people's impressions of their school life, makes me feel that either my old school was

A Wartime Schooling

prosaic or that I was insensitive. A toughish, thick child, I did not in fact suffer in any way. My vanity would have been mortified anywhere and my heart was at that age really all over the place. At my old school there was nothing particular to conform to, and the worst that can be said of it is that I got no kick out of not conforming to anything. I was only too well understood, and when I left school my relations complained that my personality had made rapid and rank growth. I talked too much with a desperate self-confidence induced perhaps by competitive talking at meals. If girls ought really to be assembled and taught, I can think of no better way of assembling and teaching them. No one dragooned us; in the course of three years I never once heard the expression *esprit de corps* and we were never addressed as future mothers. The physical discomfort was often extreme but (I am prepared to believe now that its details escape me) salutary. I regret that my palate has been blunted for life by being made to finish up everything on my plate, so that when I dine out with a gourmet my manner becomes exceedingly artificial. I was taught not only how not to write (though I still do not always write as I should) but how not, if possible, to behave, and how not to exhibit feeling. I have not much idea what more than ten people at my school were like, so cannot well generalize about our type or mentality. No one of my companions betrayed my affections, corrupted me, aggravated my inferiority complex,

made me wish I had more money, gave me a warp for life or did anything that is supposed to happen at schools. There is nothing I like better than feeling one of a herd, and after a term or two I began to feel firmly stuck in.

Memory is, as Proust has it, so oblique and selective that no doubt I see my school days through a subjective haze. I cannot believe that those three years were idyllic: days and weeks were no doubt dreary and squalid on end. I recall the most thundering disappointments and balked ambitions, but those keep repeating themselves throughout after life. Some years after I left, the house, after so much pounding and trampling, began to wear out; the school moved and the building has been reinstated as some kind of shrine, for Charles Darwin lived there for some years and died there, I believe, too. Our Morris wall-papers have been all stripped off and the white woodwork grained: the place now rather seriously and unsatirically reconstructs a late Victorian epoch. Our modern additions have been pulled down; the geography mistress has re-erected the chapel, the gymnasium, the lavatories and the music-rooms elsewhere. When I revisited the place, only the indestructible cement flooring remained. To indulge sentiment became almost impossible. I have never liked scientific people very much, and it mortifies me to think of them trampling reverently around there on visiting days, thinking of Charles Darwin and ignorant of my own youth.

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TWO PLAYS

IN an interview Miss Ina Claire, the actress, said: 'Broadway is ceasing on the whole to care for "dramatic" plays – for plays that we used to call "good theatre" – melodrama, excitement, and movement. "Good theatre" has now become bad theatre.'

I went to see the play of which she spoke. *Biography* certainly delineates human behaviour closely, with hardly magnified gestures, using a convention in which people explain their emotions to one another in an almost literary manner. As realism, this represents educated conversation more nearly than many so-called masters of dialogue will admit. In a period when the Hemingwayesque seduces authors, people in bus, train, restaurant and drawing-room are using a full-flown conversation – trite it may be – but elaborate and long-winded at the same time.

It was pleasant to watch the exterior of this play, neat and unexaggerated, for it was faultless in the medium of quiet actualism. But beyond that – it was a tenuous affair. We are presented with the portrait of a woman, who is casual towards love and tolerant towards manners. But all the interesting events, which might illustrate her

character in action, have happened before we see her; and she remains similar, if charming, through three acts. There is no growth in the play, only a static intellectual pattern, thus: certain figures represent the present order of society – a would-be senator, a plutocrat – and the two main characters take up contrary attitudes concerning them: (a) tolerant and amused, (b) intolerant and resentful. Analysis shows both attitudes to be largely temperamental and not fully understood. (a) and (b), who fall in love, realize they are contraries, and after three acts go through the business of parting. We conclude with the woman saying she will 'travel alone' (loud applause) – a sentimental phrase which is sure indication that she has no talent for solitude.

I say to myself: 'Is it the method that prevents a better study of these people? Is the finer theatre endangered by the use of actual conversation, the realistic convention authors are always revolting against and never overthrowing?' But I have only to ask the question in order to realize that here, at least, the limitation is with the dramatist's mind, which is muddled and not vitally interesting. The technique itself is not so blunt; it could be used potently in a poetic realism.

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It is questionable ingenuousness in the author of *The Laughing Woman* to announce that her play is 'suggested' by Henri Gaudier's life but does not adhere to the facts of that life. Miss Daviot gains for her work whatever glamour Gaudier's name might provide; yet where her study is unrevealing or evasive she may also claim exemption from criticism. It would have been better to offer the play as an invention, for, after all, most books and plays begin from some true life, without acknowledgment. In meditating on an actual person or experience, the creative artist speculates, figures out, draws to logical conclusions what life left vague – and there is his story. Goethe once gave the advice that poems 'must be *occasioned*'; that is to say, reality must give both impulse and material. All my poems (he said) are occasioned poems, suggested by real life, and having therein a firm foundation. I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air.' To sit in a study looking for an 'idea' is mere fancifulness. Miss Daviot might have permitted us to assume that she went through a normal process of creation.

An artist, René Latour, forms a deep attachment for an older woman, Ingrid Rydman. They leave Paris for London, where they live as brother and sister. They dine with rich patrons, and we are entertained by the contrast drawn between the directness of the artist and the obliqueness of these sophisticated Londoners. The effect is pathetic and humorous. Miss Daviot also draws well the domestic fretting, the petty erosion

of poverty, which is the artist's usual field of battle, where his spirit shows *Comme je les aime, ces correspondances de Baudelaire, de Dostoevsky où il n'est question que d'argent, toujours de l'argent, jamais de l'âme!* M. Jean Cassou has written: *Lettres saintes, écrites dans le feu et qu'on ne peut lire qu'avec des larmes*. Yet beyond his good nature, his fidelity to Ingrid, we understand little of this Latour, acted well by Mr. Stephen Haggard. Miss Veronica Turleigh played the woman, always in a state of anguish, with great artistic coolness. What a gesture, before Latour goes to join the French army, when she reaches her hands across the parcel he is packing – her fate concentrated on that symbol of his departure!

Several critics wrote to this effect: 'What extraordinary courage the management had in trusting a play to unknown actors!' Evidently it is assumed that managers cannot tell good acting when they see it, that intelligent creative casting is rare. A sadly revealing compliment.

MACBETH AT THE OLD VIC

MR. CHARLES LAUGHTON, at the Old Vic., was an unlikely Macbeth. But, in a manner of his own, he made a credible figure – weak, sensual, vain. He was infected by a speculation of grandeur – through the inexplicable nightmare of the weird sisters – but when he would shirk the action obviously entailed, he was persuaded to

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the murder by his wife, as much by an argument of body as of tongue. Miss Robson's physical persuasion showed a new aspect of Lady Macbeth – correct for such a husband – and she warmed him to a bloody temper. After a murder done in this excitement of the nerves, Macbeth's most fearful realization was that he would sleep no more. Thenceforth he became the killer, seeking by more killing to cure insomnia. He envies Duncan his sleep. He stepped waveringly in a dry fatigue, and even saw waking dreams, as of Banquo dead. His end was the climax of that illness, that sensual derangement, with hectic laughter alternating with weariness ('I have lived long enough . . .').

Miss Flora Robson was the guardian of his will, the female shadow behind all his movements, the mate of the ambitious man, fanning his strength, yet inclined to overestimate possibility. She, too, played her part upon the nerves, and comes to grief in a psychoanalyst's world.

A word for the devices of the stage; the unseen tramping feet of the armies approaching Macbeth; the storming running figures in the battle: and, before these, the secret quiet horror of Macbeth's assassinations – Banquo commenting on the weather to those hired to stab him – Macduff's wife, asking why anyone should attack an innocent person like herself, suddenly aware of dark forms standing close.

It was the last play of a memorable season at the Old Vic. Mr. Tyrone Guthrie, the producer, has not satisfied those who see Shakespeare's plays like

giant flares of poetry in no-man's-land. Many study-readers long for a Ruritanian country of poetry, far-off, to which they wish to be 'transported'. (This point of view was well expressed by Mrs. Virginia Woolf's strictures on *Twelfth Night*, first item of the season.) They demand a theatre of incantation.

Mr. Guthrie rudely broke the incantation, made Shakespeare's poetry follow the configuration of an actual world, not an ideal world. These were not heroes, these were imperfect men, speaking with a living speech which is moved a mere few paces from the commonplace. It is that perilous nearness, yet that glorious narrow remove, which constitutes the poetry – like a bull-fighter pirouetting within an inch of angry horns.

G. B.

MAGIC-LANTERN SLIDES

I Never Receive Telegrams

I NEVER receive telegrams, except from one person. It is a person unknown to me. Our sole acquaintance is by telegrams, and their contents do not enable me to 'place' the author (perhaps it is not a question of placing). I cannot relate the telegrams to the particular circumstances of my life, nor have I quite made clear as yet the practical significance which they have for the author. For me it is rather a personal contact. Telegrams are the tone of voice by which I know that this person is talking.

My correspondent is evidently

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rather highly-strung. The style is somehow spasmodic and harassed, as if the words came in snatches and between gasps. Certain of the telegrams, too, such as the following, betray an unexplained malaise: 'Temperature north stop tramways persevere irregular stop urgent.' One morning as I was going out for a walk a telegram arrived. It ran 'Never.' An hour later arrived the following: 'Cancel x tentatively y will wire result.' At other times the feeling is one of keen enthusiasm, almost of ecstasy. It seems, too, that my correspondent becomes aware of events in my experience of which I was not aware myself. This message arrived the other day: 'Felicitations and sincerest wishes for splendid success your unforgettable attitude guarantee of universal aspiration all along the line.'

Every message has something vital about it. My correspondent is pressingly earnest to impart information even if his information sometimes leaves me a little baffled. Though he does not somehow place himself, he is unquestionably alive. My telegrams are a side of my life which I value. There is something private in this relationship which leaves no trace on external affairs.

Turning Corners

He was one to whom surprises occurred. He enjoyed a continual expectation, and his life seemed to consist in turning corners when he did not know what was round the other side. He was always turning into streets he had never been down before. But with

surprises occasionally there are mistakes.

One afternoon, walking along Westbourne Grove, he turned off to the left, but he had no sooner got round the corner than he perceived he was walking on water, and water which was definitely billowy. The sensation was agreeable. He proceeded a little way before it struck him that what he was doing was walking on waves. Since the Gospels this experience has become sacrilegious. It was unfortunate. He tiptoed back and continued along the main road.

R. G. C.

THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

It was precisely on Thursday, June 16th, 1904, that Mr. Leopold Bloom, advertisement canvasser, of 7 Eccles Street, Dublin, rose from his bed, prepared breakfast, and started the whole of the *Ulysses* pother.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY

VOICES say: 'It's fashionable to sneer at the Academy. We're tired of that. In any case, it's a social event and should be treated as such. It's an institution — and a fine feature of English public life.'

Do not be deceived by those voices.

First, to say that a criticism is frequent and repetitive is not an answer to that criticism. And for one fashion to accuse its opponents of being a fashion is a boomerang retort.

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But, in truth, *is* the Academy good from a social aspect? Private View day is an 'occasion', and the galleries are packed indiscriminately with pleasant and beautiful people, dullards, and that socially worthless riff-raff known in certain newspapers as 'Society'. A day at Ascot would be more enjoyable. On the other days, dark and deathless women with very loud voices – notorious product of the Victorian age – emerge from their lacy dwellings in Kensington and raise their piercing vocalism without intelligence to a very high pitch. They are often accompanied by a stout sort of man who, whenever another person addresses a remark to him, calls out very forcibly: 'What's that?' whether he has heard the remark or not. This defiant noise, it seems, absolves him from the necessity of making a proper reply – or anyhow postpones it. Would one really venture to take a charming young girl among such blatant creatures on a June afternoon? I fear not; socially, the Academy in general attracts the worst people. It is a rendezvous of upper-class vulgarity.

'Ah! but it's an institution,' say the voices. What *is* an institution? Let us see. The genius of a living institution is its capacity to absorb the new, allow it to appear side by side with the less new, and so to possess both stability and movement at the same time. It comprises pioneers; a main body which

consolidates positions; and a rearguard of curators who keep abandoned positions on record. The Royal Academy has only curators. As an institution, therefore, it is incomplete and unbalanced. It is also darkened by old men's fear and hate and a notable lack of generosity. They have forgotten that what academicians esteem always comes from what they deplore, they have forgotten the fundamental unrespectability of art – for vitality is always slightly vulgar. Mr. Yeats has put this eternal situation into a few lines of verse:

Bald heads forgetful of their sins,
Old, learned, respectable bald heads
Edit and annotate the lines
That young men, tossing on their beds,
Rhymed out in love's despair
To flatter beauty's ignorant ear . . .
Lord, what would they say
Should their Catullus walk that way?

If a foreigner asked me where he should go in order to see the most artistic expression of English public life, I should not say: 'Go to Burlington House,' but 'Do not fail to see the Trooping of the Colour, or the Alder-shot Tattoo.' The decorative side of the British Army, apart from its military side, exhibits more genuine art than fifteen Royal Academies.

G. B.

Reviews

PLATO'S BRITANNIA

GOLDSWORTHY LOWES DICKINSON. By
E. M. FORSTER. Arnold. 10s. 6d.

IN any portrait of an Academic figure a certain quantity of local absurdity is to be looked for. The life itself, with its innocent and painstaking invasions of Common values, is slightly absurd; to succeed in it, so far as to become an influence, a man must carry the simplicity and industry appropriate to the place, to the point where the absurd wavers on the verge of the ridiculous, and the figure becomes a figure of fun. Lowes Dickinson escaped the destiny to which Oscar Browning and McTaggart succumbed, partly by a natural tact in the management of advancing years, partly by the persistent if ineffectual extroversion of his impulses. The League of Nations is no joke, and Dickinson's devotion to the last of his ideas gives a certain solidity and dignity to the whole of his career.

Many readers will probably feel that his life was quite worth writing because Mr. Forster has written it. Subject and biographer could not have been more nicely adjusted to each other. No shadow of the ridiculous clouds the portrait, and the guarded penetrations of the painter's eye discloses without superfluous explanation, all that a reader, outside the circle, needs in

order to understand how Dickinson appeared to those within. A great University man, unless he has some body of scholarship to his name, is at best a wraithlike figure; a meeting place of influences, embodied in his own personality, persisting, perhaps for a generation, as an influence himself, and then dissolving into a memory, a tradition and last of all a name. Where is Nettleship, where is Green, where now is Hurrell Froude?

Where indeed are the writings of Lowes Dickinson himself? His vogue was great. By middle life he was accepted as a prose classic. But Mr. Forster does not claim for him the rank either of a great writer or a great philosopher. He had the Platonic mind. But was it a good Platonic mind? The Aristotelian is always as ready to suspect a lack of fundamental brainwork in the Platonist, as the Platonist to adjoin that the Aristotelian is excellent at getting to the bottom of things and staying there. Yet this much may be admitted; the Aristotelian mind can be good, and is serviceable, at all levels: this Platonic mind, short of the highest levels, is all too ready to be content with seeming synthesis, to come to rest in a Schattenreich which is very far from the Kingdom of Ideas. Our most notorious Platonist told Dickinson, frankly and unkindly,



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Reviews

that he was a prig. One can imagine Socrates knitting his great brows and going warily to work with the Dean of St. Paul's. How would he have handled Dickinson?

'But you have not heard him, Socrates?'

'No, my friend, and I am not sure that it would be good for me to hear him. As you know, I am very susceptible to charms and incantations and music of every kind, and it behoves me therefore to be more careful than another man what music I listen to. Before I put myself under the spell, I must know whether the singer is, as the poets say, a servant of the Muses or of the Sirens. Because the Sirens are of two sorts: there are the Bad Sirens of whom Homer tells us, who lure seafarers to their destruction and against whose song there is no defence but to stop the ears and row as fast as oars will carry you; and there are the Good Sirens, whose country, I think, is not very far from the land of the Lotus Eaters, perhaps between the Lotus Eaters and Sicily, because I have heard sayings reported of your friend, such as one, spoken in war-time. "This year should have had no spring," which reminded me not a little of Gorgias and made me think that it was perhaps with some melody learnt from those Sirens that he first enchanted Phaedrus here. For they do everything to music, and those who have visited the land tell us that what they have seen and heard cannot be reported in language but must be set to music and performed as a Dance.

'They say, however, that in that land it is easy to be a philosopher because the Forms of things are not, as with us, to be apprehended with pain and toil, but come when they are called, with a golden mist about them which makes apples look like pears, and Dorians like Ionians. And another thing that makes me think these Sirens live somewhere in the West is that Parmenides seems to have heard their song, because he speaks of certain debonair Muses who profess that all is love and joy though much of it happens somehow to be discord and conflict, and against them he sets the austere Muses who see it all as difference always moving towards unity.

'That these Sirens are affectionate, unselfish, witty and charming we may well believe: and we may believe too that through their golden mist they have visions of a West beyond their own, which while the air was calm we might share with them, unless indeed there were among us some who doubted whether the vision was not the mist. For they are very hospitable to strangers, and many young seafarers have left their land with fuller minds and keener eyes for their instructions. Only, what happens when the North East wind comes, as Homer says "shouting over the wine-dark sea, scathing the mist and covering the ground with fruit", no one has told us. But the Muses, we know, were born among the mountains and the thunder, and nursed not in meadows but in caves, and those who have ventured say that no darkness can quite obscure their brightness, no storm

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has ever silenced their voice. Perhaps therefore as life is an unstable, dangerous thing, we might do best to speak good words, as they deserve, of the Sirens, but to keep for the Muses our sacrifices and our prayers.'

COSSACK EPIC

AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON. By MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV. Translated by STEPHEN GARRY. Putnam. 7s. 6d.

THIS vast epic of Cossack life before and during the War, and in the Revolution, of which only the first two volumes have been included in the present English translation (the third volume was published in Russia about a year ago and the fourth is in course of preparation), met in Russia with enormous success. It was Sholokhov's first important work (since then he has written the first parts of another big novel, *The Uplifted Soil*, dealing with the collectivization of agriculture in the Cossack regions, of which, we believe, an English version is also in preparation); and on its appearance it was hailed by several people, including Gorky, as a great literary event.

In the Russian press it was currently compared to Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. This is, of course, an obvious exaggeration: Sholokhov's novel lacks the scope and grandeur of that masterpiece of nineteenth century literature. It is also an exaggeration to proclaim it 'the greatest novel of the age'. But, *toutes proportions gardées*, there is something in the comparison between it and

War and Peace, for the simple reason that in manner and construction the author consciously treads in Tolstoy's path. In this his novel does not stand alone, but represents one of the numerous manifestations of a return to the traditions of classical novel of late noticeable in Russia. Curiously enough this tendency to Classicism is associated in the first place with the Communist and proletarian section of contemporary Russian literature, and Gorky is one of its principal sponsors. Literary discussions which have been going on in Russia during the last year or two (in fact ever since the literary 'counter-revolution' of 1932) revealed a curious picture of the two main opposing forces: they can be roughly described as Classicism and Nationalism on one hand, and Modernism and Westernism on the other. 'Shall we look back to Pushkin and Tolstoy, or shall we learn from Proust and Joyce?' was the question which occupied Soviet Russian writers. Most of the hundred per cent Communist and proletarian writers sided with Pushkin and Tolstoy, literary Conservatism thus going hand-in-hand with political revolutionariness. (There was really nothing new in this, for such was also the position in the first decade of our century, when Realism and Symbolism were the two contending forces in Russian literature, but in Soviet Russian literature it was a new phase, as Gorky rightly observed.) Sholokhov, whom it would be wrong, however, to describe as a proletarian writer (he is himself a Cossack and his father was

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a mill manager), is a typical representative of the 'National-Classicist' tendency, and along with Fadeyev, the author of *Rout* (translated into English under the title *Nineteen*) one of the principal 'Tolstoyans' in contemporary Russian literature.

And Quiet Flows the Don is essentially a realistic novel, a book brimful with life. It is also a historical novel in the sense in which *War and Peace* is a historical novel; inasmuch as, alongside a multitude of lifelike fictitious characters, it introduces a number of real-life characters, historical personages like Generals Kornilov, Alexeyev, Kaledin, the Bolshevik Podtelkov and other chief actors in the Civil War drama, and is staged against a historical background. This historical background is never lost sight of by the author, and he often quotes actual documents of the period, especially in the parts dealing with War and Revolution. What distinguishes him from Tolstoy is the absence of a deliberate *anti-historical* bias which constitutes the kernel of Tolstoy's philosophy of history. Sholokhov avoids philosophizing about history, and is right in doing so: for, even granting Tolstoy's intellect, this proved a pitfall and the weakest spot in the otherwise superb performance. On the whole Sholokhov is truthful and objective in his historical presentation, in so far as a Communist writing under the present regime in Russia can be objective. He does not paint all his Reds as heroes and all his Whites and villains. True, there is some idealization in the figure of

Bunchuk, the Communist propagandist and leader of a machine-gun detachment, who plays an important part in the second part of the novel where he ultimately meets his death, together with Podtelkov and others, at the hands of the Cossacks who turn anti-Bolshevik. But towards the end of his career we see him primarily as a man, not as a paragon of Communist virtues. Nor does Sholokhov deny heroism to the opponents of Bolshevism, and there is a touch of grandeur in the description of the death of Kalmykov, a Cossack officer, at the hands of Bunchuk. There is also a sense of tragedy devoid of the usual hostility, in the portrayal of the Cossack Ataman Kaledin, especially in the scene preceding his suicide. Nor is it accidental that the author makes his principal character, Grigory Melekhov, change sides and go over from the Reds to the Whites – in the third volume, not yet translated, we see him actually fighting the Bolsheviks; but possibly in the fourth he will once more turn Red, for in a recent interview Sholokhov said that he was dissatisfied with the first three volumes, so perhaps he will now try to bring his work into line with the demands of 'Socialist Realism', this latest slogan of Soviet literary lawgivers. This would be a pity. At present the powerful unqualified realism and vitality, transcending all bonds of preconceived ideology, constitute the greatest attraction of this book. It is natural that Sholokhov should be at his best in writing of the Cossacks and their life and surroundings, and that

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his creative grip fails him whenever he ventures outside those limits. His style, though essentially realistic, is full of imagery, especially in his admirable descriptions of nature. It abounds in local expressions which make the translation rather difficult, and on the whole Mr. Stephen Garry has coped well with a difficult task. There is, however, an annoying inconsistency in the spelling of Russian names (e.g., Golubov and Pogoodko) – why would not translators and publishers adopt the scheme of transliteration proposed by the British Academy? Once more be it said, in conclusion that, although not epoch-making, *And Quiet Flows the Don* is an interesting and powerful work.

MUSIC HO!

MUSIC HO! By CONSTANT LAMBERT.
Faber & Faber, 10s. 6d.

BEFORE Constant Lambert was twenty-one, Diaghilev had singled him out as the first English composer to receive the coveted distinction of a commission to write a score for the Russian Ballet. A few years after the production of *Romeo and Juliet* at Monte Carlo (1926), the somewhat unexpected success of the *Rio Grande* made it clear that (as so often before) Diaghilev's confidence had not been misplaced. More recently Constant Lambert has shown himself, both at home and abroad, to be a conductor of sterling merit, by performances of such dissimilar works as Vaughan Williams's *Job*, Schön-

berg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*. As if not content with all this, he has now produced a book which is indubitably the best survey of contemporary music written in English since the war.

Mr. Lambert has drawn upon Shakespeare for his title and, as in the case of tabloid quotations used for a similar purpose (such as *Her Privates We*), it is only fair to author and reader alike to give the pertinent passage from *Antony and Cleopatra* in full:

All. The music, ho!
Enter Mardian the Eunuch
Cleopatra. Let it alone; let's to
billiards.

Cleopatra's preference, coupled with Mr. Lambert's sub-title 'A Study of Music in Decline,' makes it clear in advance that modern music is going to emerge from this survey shorn of most of its false glitter and prestige.

Curiously enough, the two figures who come through this ordeal almost unscathed are Sibelius and Satie, the former because he is 'the only modern composer who has maintained a steady and logical progress' and the latter because he is 'the only modern composer whose music, in its complete lack of any romanticism, pictorialism or dramatic atmosphere, can be described as abstract.' There is also a kind word for jazz, not the pseudo-symphonic variety such as the *Rhapsody in Blue*, but the ten-inch record compositions of Duke Ellington; and Kurt Weill's incidental music to Bert Brecht's communist plays, such as *Mahagonny* and

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Die Dreigroschenoper, receives at last its rightful due.

But what of the arch-fiend, Stravinsky? Despite the fact that Mr. Lambert sees only too clearly through the superficial impressionism of his pre-war ballets and the neo-classical pastiche of his post-war concertos, Stravinsky cannot be kept out of the argument. Like King Charles' Head, he crops up on almost every page. It doesn't matter whether Mr. Lambert, with a vast amount of patience and clever dove-tailing, skips from impressionism to nationalism, from exoticism to jazz, from neo-classicism to surrealism, at every turn of his argument he is confronted with this Russian bogeyman, until finally he has to agree with Mr. Cecil Gray that had Stravinsky not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him.

Other composers fare even worse. For example, de Falla is abruptly dismissed in a short sentence; and some of the younger generation, such as Bliss, Markevitch, Knipper, etc., are not mentioned at all. Ravel is rightly warned that 'there is a definite limit to the length of time a composer can go on writing in one dance rhythm, and this limit is obviously reached towards the end of *La Valse* and towards the beginning of *Bolero*'; while Hindemith, having abandoned the spiritual background of the romantic artist and failed to adapt himself to the physical background of modern life, is stigmatized as being 'neither a good wife nor an attractive whore.'

The great value of *Music Ho!* lies in

the deceptively easy way in which Mr Lambert not only links up the various multi-form tendencies of music during the last thirty years, but also relates them succinctly and provokingly to the sister arts of literature, painting, architecture and the cinema. He thereby avoids the impression that music exists in a kind of spiritual vacuum, and his arguments should win over many readers who are not technical musicians, but who wish to know how contemporary composers are adapting themselves to modern conditions and what part music is likely to play in the brave new world of to-morrow.

THESE HURRYING YEARS

THESE HURRYING YEARS. By GERALD HEARD. Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d.

MR. HEARD has attempted to put the history of the last thirty years 'in true perspective', to describe scientific progress and artistic development during these years, and to point out their lessons for mankind. He had several alternatives. He might have made a historical, documented and scientific study. He might have recorded his personal impression of events as they occurred. Or, granted adequate philosophic powers, he could have interpreted events in the light of his own intelligence. It is possible that all these aims were present in his mind, but that he fell back on yet another alternative, which may be called the

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journalistic interpretation of history. He is aware, as he writes, of a vast ill-educated public which likes to be told of its own importance: it wants to be excited, soothed, terrified and reassured in turn, but it does not want to be informed.

The mentality of the public whom Mr. Heard has in mind is reflected in the style of his book, which is based on a kind of generalization which says nothing, and says it in the most spectacular language. The reader is continually hurried to some stupendous brink:

'We can see the deep Trend under us to-day so clearly because to-day it is risen almost to the surface and, a swift and embracing current, is sweeping us to the brink,'

but what it is, the author does not profess to know, or conceals his knowledge in his rhetoric:

'Whether when Liberalism has learned to think and Conversatism to feel, when those who live for the future understand the vitality and meaning of the past, and those who live in the past can sympathize with the faith and force of the future, whether then there may be a humanity saved and safe for civilization, no contemporary dare say.'

This is not even competent journalism; it is simply nonsense. Moreover the stylistic badness is no accident; it is inherent in the book. In its historical sections, phrases are substituted for references, and throughout science is

degraded to superstition. Its terminology of 'Forces' and 'Trends' is the traditional bombast of the quack. And sure enough, Mr. Heard has his cure-all. He sees with alarm the 'mass-hysteria of Germany in the summer of 1933', and concludes:

'Either by suggestion to control the pituitary and the other emotion-causing glands or by endocrine extracts to control the state of mind we can alone with any hope of success try to tackle the danger.'

He rejects, in the next sentence, all other means of salvation, 'change in outer circumstances, economic conferring or planning, readjustments, political or geographical,' only to offer the startling alternative of dosing the masses with pituitrin. Like the Cartesian theory of the pineal gland, and the Viennese fashion for sexual rejuvenation by monkey-glands, Mr. Heard's pituitary theories are more akin to superstition than to science. 'Part of this gland,' he says, 'acts as a stimulator of the intellect, so that when it is in a state of activity the brain is stirred, and curiosity, the wish to experiment and the drive to achievement, is so great that all considerations of compassion or social obligation may be eclipsed. The opposite part of the gland acts as a stimulator of the emotions which balance those of the intellect. It rouses compassion and sympathy.' These effects will not be found in a scientific textbook; they are as imaginative a conception as the influences of the stars. And in any case, if we are to combat Hitlerism by

Reviews

doses of gland extract, we must first find better means of persuading the Nazis that they need the medicine.

This may serve as an example of Mr. Heard as a scientist. As a historian he has similar faults. His narrative is not of the kind that refers to sources, so that he is at liberty to rewrite history according to his frame of mind. H. G. Wells' *Outline of History* was a classic of this kind of writing; but what may be indulged in a work which deals with the whole of history, will not do for an account of a limited period immediately preceding our own. In order to attain a 'true perspective', Mr. Heard has had to make a good many rough places smooth. He can be wonderfully vague, as in his characterization of the General

Strike. 'A certain number of people wanted a general social confusion for a confused number of purposes.' He consistently denies the importance of economic factors explicitly, and admits them implicitly; and he is content to assume, without the support of facts, the truth of such a statement as 'Labour and its socialism, Marxism and its revolution were all having their day of trial and that success which preludes failure and elimination'. This may be all very well as propaganda, but as history it is lamentable.

It would not be necessary to criticize such a book so severely if it were not likely to be taken seriously by so many people. It is in fact written to meet a very widespread demand. The public which welcomed *The Mys-*



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terious Universe will welcome *These Hurrying Years*. For there is nothing they like better than to be told that their generation is unique – what generation is not? – and that ‘a birth of a wider consciousness is taking place among us’. ‘Such a crisis is naturally dangerous’, says our author, and his reader glows with the pleasure of such invisible dangers. But Mr. Heard thinks there is reason for hope. ‘We may not get through. But at the same time, there is no inherent reason why we should not.’ Who are ‘We’? and

what exactly is it that we are ‘getting through’? These are questions which the reader has no call to ask.

The only ‘practical’ suggestion put forward is the proposal to feed Fascists on endocrine extract; and this is plainly impossible. The reader must accordingly fall back on his major task, that of attaining a deeper knowledge of himself. As Mr. Heard phrases it in his final peroration ‘There is a hope, therefore, for our generation in so far as it has a courage intense enough to be quiet’.



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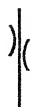
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A Defence of Story-Telling

by Charles Morgan

I

OF late years, the production of stories has greatly increased. They are told on screen and stage, in books and magazines and newspapers. They are advertised as nothing but soap was advertised in the past, and there seems to be scarcely a woman in England or America that has not a manuscript under her arm. Against production of this kind there was bound to be a revolt of opinion.

I would not if I could discourage this revolt. To consider in what way, with what motive and equipment, many of these stories are written is to wish that the writers of them would earn a more honest living in a less speculative trade. It happens to be true that great stories have been composed by people whom a scholastic board would describe as 'unqualified';

it is therefore rashly assumed that no apprenticeship is necessary and that anyone is entitled to write a book who has an inkpot and a grievance. It was bad enough when the fashion in authorship was for novels and plays. Most of the plays did not see the light for the comfortable reason that the production of plays is expensive, and we were in some degree protected even from the novels by the simple fact that the worst of plots requires a little patience to give it continuity. The immediate future is more alarming. Autobiography is being treated as a branch of novel writing. A cloud of confession hangs over us which will burst in a storm of erotic self-pity. It was once considered desirable to learn how to live and how to write before attempting an autobio-

A Defence of Story-Telling

graphy. Now every schoolgirl knows that she carries her confessions in her pillowcase, and that, unlike Lord Byron, she has only to go to bed one night to find herself famous.

For this reason, among others, imaginative authorship has fallen into disrepute. It is not, heaven knows, neglected. It is flattered as it has never been. Doubtless there are authors who, whether they personally delight in it or not, accept this drum-beating as evidence that the importance of their art is being recognized by the modern world. In truth, it is evidence of nothing but the world's unfailing reaction to all forms of notoriety. The drum is beaten, not in honour of the work of art, but in clamour for the man whose name and photograph have become hypnotically familiar. People stare at him as they stare at the walls of a house in which a murder has been committed. They invite him to dinner as they would invite a murderer to dinner if they could. This is nothing new. There has never been a time when the vulgar would not run out from a tragedy to witness a hanging. We have to accept this and make the best of it; it would be a waste of time to attempt a defence of story-telling against such attentions as these. But it is worth while to defend it against the coldness, the suspicious contempt, with which it is often treated by discriminating men and women whose collective opinion is, in fact, the opinion of their age.

An artist who makes, in a world which is, or pretends that it is, pre-

dominantly interested in science, the highest possible claim for his own art is treading upon very dangerous ground. Nevertheless I claim that story-telling is among the supreme activities of the human mind, co-equal with those activities to which the greatest men of science have devoted their lives; that by it truth is made known; and that, altogether apart from any direct influence it may have upon conduct, it is as necessary and, in the most exalted sense, as useful, as any service to mankind in which the genius of the race has been engaged.

How formidable and how consistent the distrust of story-telling has been is made clear in all the pages of history. The Greeks alone seem to have been relatively exempt from it, and even among the Greeks Plato would not accord to poets a place in his Republic. When classical learning, in the last days of the Roman Empire and after the Empire's disruption, was fighting a losing battle with Christian innovation, the distrust, the fear of story-telling in all its many forms became insistent. It did not cease to be beloved; it has never ceased to be beloved; but the leaders of contemporary thought, even while they loved it and secretly devoured it, spoke of it continually with misgiving, as of a temptation that good men should resist.

Miss Helen Waddell, in her book on *The Wandering Scholars*, quotes many instances of this prejudice, and among them that of Jerome. 'The songs of the poets are the food of demons,' he says, '... their suavity is a delight to all

Charles Morgan

men. . . . The very priests of God are reading comedies, singing the love songs of the *Bucolics*, turning over Virgil; and that which was a necessity in boyhood, they make the guilty pleasure of their maturity' Nearly a thousand years later, in 1285, Nicholas, Chancellor of the University of Paris, said: 'We are in danger, we who read the writings of the pagan poets.' The danger perceived in pagan literature was not only, and not chiefly, that it was heretical, but that it was so often beautiful and, as the grave churchmen thought, a diversion from the quest of God. 'By some, I know not what, factious bond,' exclaimed the preacher of a university sermon in Toulouse in 1229, 'lust and literature cling together,' and we have been told how the abbess of Hohenberg 'made an ingenious sketch for her nuns, a rose window design of Philosophy with Plato and Socrates at her feet, the seven liberal arts in a circle, but in the corners of the page are four figures inscribing naughtiness, the poets, the magicians, the idle story-tellers, each inspired by a lean black fowl of portentous neck who sits on his shoulder and whispers in his ear.'

It is unnecessary to pursue this attitude of mind through the centuries. Sometimes it is the Catholic Church that warns mankind against story-tellers, sometimes it is Puritanism that banishes stage plays from the sight of the godly; sometimes it is commerce enthroned that contemptuously leaves novel-reading to its womenfolk who treat it, and are expected to treat it,

as they treat gossip, a box of chocolates or a hand at cards. Lady Blessington, who admired Bulwer and read him with delight, was inclined to pity him because the novel was a medium beneath what she considered to be the true level of his powers. 'Authors like Mr. Bulwer,' she said, 'whose minds are overflowing with genius, are compelled to make fiction the vehicle for giving to the public thoughts and opinions that are deserving of a higher grade of literature.' Even the ages that have done conspicuous honour to their story-tellers have done it in the spirit of one who raises the pay of his housemaid. With the possible exception of Voltaire, Dickens was more honoured in his lifetime than any writer, but whose occupation was considered to be the more serious, his or Gladstone's? Not long ago a play was performed that had for its subject the life of Carlyle. When he spoke of the agony and labour that the first volume of his *French Revolution* had cost him, the audience received his remark with respectful sympathy. He was a historian, and historians are to be taken seriously, like politicians, lawyers and men of science. But when a novelist, who happened to be present on the stage, said that she also had suffered in the composition of her tale, the audience laughed heartily. Why? Partly, it is true, because she was Geraldine Jewsbury, a slightly ridiculous person, but chiefly, I am sure, because a modern audience does not differ from its predecessors in regarding novel-writing as a very trivial occupation.

A Defence of Story-Telling

II

The acknowledged leaders of thought to-day, corresponding to the churchmen and puritans of the past, are beyond question the men of science, the economists, the biologists, the sociologists and the political theorists. These are the modern hierarchy, and all over the world the most intelligent and vital members of the younger generation sit at their feet. What is their attitude to the art of story-telling? It is very clearly indicated in the extraordinary cult of the detective story among them. Though Oxford, like the Greeks, is comparatively exempt, there is said to be scarcely a science don at Cambridge or a bluestocking in Bloomsbury who does not prop a detective-novel against the coffee-pot. Their reason is not that they love the art of fiction, but that they despise it. A detective-novel is a thing apart. It is not, and does not pretend to be, a work of art; it is an exercise in ingenuity, and the reading of it is comparable with the solving of a crossword puzzle. The dons read it, not because they are bloodthirsty, but because, if blood appears in it at all, it appears on the carpet as a clue and not in the veins of the characters as a stimulus to imagination. There is, certainly, no harm in reading books of this kind. I happen to find them unreadable, but that is no reason for condemning them, for I have the same impatience of bridge, of crossword puzzles and indeed of all semi-intellectual means of wasting time. But every man is entitled to his own method of

relaxation and I take it to be no worse to read a detective story than to play trains on the nursery floor. The interest of the practice lies in its special implications. If I play trains on the nursery floor, I do not boast about it, but among learned men the reading of detective stories is a foible of which they are inordinately proud. They discuss the stories with other learned men; they compare the points of one story with the points of another; they make a paraded affectation of the whole affair. Ask them of a book by Huxley or Thomas Mann and they say: 'I am afraid I read no fiction but detective stories,' and they await a snigger of applause. Why? Because they wish it to be understood that, though they are willing to read nonsense in odd moments, they are not such fools as to take imaginative literature seriously.

This is one angle of contempt. Another is even more remarkable. There are many people, particularly very young people, belonging generally to the political left, who are careful to distinguish between pure story-telling and story-telling with a social content. I do not wish to misrepresent them by suggesting that they will admire no story that is not party propaganda, though this is too often the spirit of their criticism. Their more moderate argument is, roughly, this: that it is one of the principal duties of a novel to reflect, if not the manners, at any rate the spirit of its age; that romantic individualism, because the world is tending more and more to one form or another of the corporate state, is dead;

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that the two dominating problems of our day are economic inequality and the prevention of war; and that novels which are not given over to the discussion of these problems are frivolous and indeed anti-social. The catchword is social-consciousness. Social-consciousness has been dragged in to do service as an aesthetic value. Truth and Beauty are considered to be old-fashioned tests in the estimate of a work of art, which must, to be regarded seriously, have a social revolutionary core.

This point of view may be easily understood. Pure story-telling – a love story, for example, such as *Tristan and Iseult* or *Manon Lescaut* or Turgenev's *First Love* – is regarded as a drug. It gives pleasure and, therefore, like vodka in Russia, tends to blunt the edge of a desirable discontent. It leads men to look inwards upon their own souls, or, looking outward, to discover at once the beauty of individual experience and the vanity of collective endeavour. To read the great stories of the world is to realize more and more that the world is improved and can be improved very little by collective and deliberate action. It affects the fringe of manners; it exchanges one man's poverty for another man's riches; it checks the tyranny of kings to establish the tyranny of dictators; it puts more money into men's pockets and then depreciates its value in terms of goods; it increases the speed of transport and proportionately increases the distances that a man must travel each day to his business. Meanwhile man's happiness or unhappiness, his value or worthlessness,

depends upon his private philosophy – on his power to love and to respond to love, on his faculty of pleasure in little things, on his belief or disbelief in heaven and hell, on his capacity for hope and acceptance – in brief on the nature and strength of his secret imagination. Story-telling and poetry teach him this and teach it continually. They make of economic theory not a burning faith but, philosophically, a matter of indifference. They lead men to say that they would rather have written Gray's *Elegy* than take Quebec, they lead men to think that since eternity is long and youth short they would rather win their lady than the Bastille. Prisons, say the great story tellers, are always rebuilt; ladies, unfortunately, are not. Prisons, say the story-tellers again, are not set up by a man's environment but by himself, by his fears, his hatreds, his jealousies, his weaknesses, and there is no escape from them except in his own contemplative wisdom or in the three great acts of transcendence – love, poetry, and death. Very naturally those who wish to use mankind as the material of collective experiment dislike all stories that do not awaken a belligerent social consciousness. For precisely the same reason the Walrus and the Carpenter would have condemned romantic individualism among oysters.

The objections to story-telling may, then, be summarized as follows. First, there is the feeling of plain men that a story is a luxury and an entertainment, a means of wasting time more or less pleasantly. Second, there is the general

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objection of men of science and the leaders of contemporary thought that story-telling is inexact, that indulgence in it produces irrelevant and confusing emotions, that it does not advance the truth and that it must not, therefore, be taken seriously. Third, there is the objection of those who, while admitting that certain stories have been and may still be powerful instruments of reform, sincerely believe that, in the present condition of the world, a purely aesthetic novel is anti-social because it does nothing to advance, and may even retard, improvement of human conditions. It is a very formidable indictment.

III

To answer it by an examination of the great novels of the past and their influence on human destiny would be to fall into confusion and to invite the retort that they are, after all, of the past, and that it is with the present that we are concerned. To brandish great names and to ask whether Shakespeare or Newton did the greater service to God and man would be to indulge in vain rhetoric. There is no way to attack the infinite complexity of this moral and aesthetic problem except at its philosophic root.

Men have always been profoundly concerned to speculate on the nature of reality, and not philosophers only. The plainest and, in his own view, the most materialistic of men, who would mock at any suggestion that he was a metaphysician, nevertheless speculates on reality by implication whenever he

proudly denies his belief in anything but what his senses directly communicate to him; and, at the opposite extreme, the most devout of men who, having deliberately put inquiry away from him, accepts without question the dogma of some sect, is, without fully realizing it, speculating by proxy, for all dogmas spring from and have their differences in opposed views of what is real and what is unreal. Faith and conduct have their origin here. If a man believes that only the bodies of things are real, he will behave and think in one way; if he believes that minds as well as bodies are real, he will behave in another; if he believes that with minds and bodies the total reality is not complete, but that there is a third component which we may call the supernatural, he will behave in another. He will behave differently in each instance because in each instance he will think differently. By his theory of reality his whole system of values will be affected.

What is real and what unreal I do not propose to argue here. The point upon which I wish to insist is that the process by which a man arrives at his theory of reality is not, and cannot be, a strict argument from cause to effect or from effect to cause. He cannot in this, as in other matters, build securely on a basis of observed fact because the reality of his observation is one of the questions he has to decide. For this reason there cannot be a strictly scientific proof of any theory of reality. A man who insists upon such a proof must admit that he is without a

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theory, and yet, if he have no theory of what is real, his values are without root and his conduct is empirical merely.

If reasoned conduct depends upon values, and reasoned values depend upon a persuasion of what is real, and a persuasion of what is real can be arrived at only with the aid of imagination and not by scientific argument alone, does it not inevitably follow that the whole of a man's being, from his least outward act to his innermost contact with his God, has its key in an imaginative process?

In what way does the imagination operate? For the greater part of most men's lives, it operates over a fairly wide range but on a single plane. As memory, it recalls the past to him; as fear or greed or hope it anticipates the future, working always on or very near the surface of his experience. Even its researches below the surface, of which the psycho-therapists speak, though they penetrate the crust of his conscious mind, do not, in the eye of eternity, go very far; and it will be observed that though from a man at a given instant of his life the shafts of imagination move forward into the future or backward into the past, they do not ordinarily strike into the present. He is lifting a glass of wine to his lips; he imagines what its taste will be; he imagines what the taste of a similar wine has been in the past; the wine reaches his tongue and again his imagination flies out forward and back – in recollection of other pleasures associated with this pleasure or of

penalties that he has paid for it and may have to pay again. In the immediate present, he is given over to the operation of his sense of taste and does not imagine at all. Because he is tasting the wine, he ceases to imagine it.

But, it will be said, what is there for him to imagine? The taste, the actuality, has displaced the former image of it. The answer is that, in the poised instant, he may by imagination be carried beyond the idea of this particular wine to the idea of wine as such. I have chosen a commonplace example of what I believe to be an important truth – that imagination is the means, and the only means, by which man may proceed from sensuous knowledge of the particular to intuitive apprehension of the universal. This is the key to imaginative writing. This is what is called – I think misleadingly – the creative act of an artist. An artist is one who has developed in high degree an imaginative faculty of penetrating the appearances of things and of discovering their vital essence. Nor, except in its intensity, is this process exceptional. Everyone is aware of it at special and memorable instants of his life. Outside your house there is a path through a wood with, at its end, an open prospect of sky and valley. Ordinarily, as you walk down this path on a summer's day, your feeling is of gladness that the leaves are green and, at the end, that the view is beautiful. One day your mood changes. You feel that the world is brilliant and shining, your gladness becomes joy, your joy almost exaltation; you feel, not

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physical well-being only, but spiritual well-being; the present rushes in upon you and becomes intensified; you have a sense of penetration beyond the appearances of things; through your pleasure in the green wood wells up, like water from the earth, a pleasure in greenness itself, and through your customary delight in the loveliness of the countryside comes an apprehensions of beauty itself. These moments of heightened perception come to the simplest of men. They do not express it, perhaps, in the terms in which I have expressed it. They do not say that they have perceived greenness itself or beauty itself; probably they say nothing at all; but they know that their life has been enriched, and, if they remember the instant, they are made by it more sensitive to similar impressions in themselves and more charitable to them in others. These experiences, though most men are too modest to claim them as such, are of the same kind with the experiences of saints and artists, though not of the same degree of intensity.

They take many forms. One of these forms is the experience of mathematicians, whose apprehension sometimes mysteriously outruns their logical processes. All of us who, in the humblest way, have trod the foothills of higher mathematics, know what it is now and then to become aware of the solution of a problem without having gone through the steps by which ordinarily that solution would have been approached, and I suggest very tentatively that men who are to me,

in the world of mathematics, what I am in the world of literature to a child learning to spell, have almost certainly had experience of direct mathematical apprehension which has caused them to feel, if but for a moment, that they were in contact with truths outside the present range of their intellects.

But the mathematical form of this experience is beyond the reach of most of us. There are other and more familiar forms of it. Perhaps the commonest is that which I have described – an experience related to flowers and wood and sky and earth. Even a motorist is capable of such an experience who, while going at eighty miles an hour, enters into the idea of speed. Certainly, when we are young, we are mysteriously capable of it – first in our childhood and again when we fall in love.

It is the general habit of the world to laugh at lovers, to say that they are mad, to treat them as if they were beings temporarily removed from the plane of ordinary life; and in this the world is more right than it knows. If love were no more than an excitement of the senses pursuing a biological sequence from cause to effect, what would there be to laugh at? Where then would madness appear? If love were this alone, it would be no more amusing or mysterious or mad than hunger, and would not appear to be so. The truth is that young lovers *are* removed from the plane of ordinary life. Common things shine for them. They feel that the earth was created only as a scene for their love and is, in

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that sense, unreal. The cant phrases about lovers are for them true – that they ‘see each other with new eyes’ or that ‘the world is made new for them’. From our point of view they are bewitched, they are ‘translated’ like poor Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; from their point of view we are stricken with blindness. What has happened? Their imagination has ceased to be sluggish as ours commonly is. It is quick, fiery, powerful, penetrative of the instant. It has revealed to them, in whatever beauty each may possess, the radiance of another and universal beauty. They are – to use the word in the strict meaning of its Greek derivation – in an ecstasy: ‘out of their senses’. Two of the most familiar lines of Shelley precisely express this idea of the universals that lie, or are felt to lie, behind particular experiences.

Life, like a dome of many coloured
glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity.

Sometimes the dome ceases to be opaque. The radiance shines through. Imagination, when brilliant and vital, clears the glass; imagination that is dull and sluggish clouds it. All this, I submit, is not a matter of exceptional experience known only to mystical saints and great artists. It is, though rarely perhaps and in mild degree, the common experience of mankind.

But the tendency of the human imagination is to congeal. A thousand influences produce this tendency, particularly in a modern world. Inde-

pendence of character, a bold individualism in thought and behaviour, is becoming increasingly rare. Uniformity of education, standardized environment, that doubtful blessing – speed of communication, films, wireless, above all the extreme difficulty of solitude – these things, which, from one point of view, are progressive, make more and more for the standardization of man and the attachment of spurious prides to material things. To put it briefly, he is desperately afraid of being a freak. He dresses, speaks and thinks as others dress, speak and think. He is afraid to imagine. He shuts himself up in a little prison of conventional negations. His thought springs from catchword to catchword as the popular newspapers may dictate. At one moment his catchword is science – and science means for him faster and faster movement. He does not ask why or whither. When his newspaper tells him that another ‘record’ has been broken, he goes through, like an automaton, all the emotions of rejoicing. At another moment, his catchword is psychoanalysis, which enables him to say, whenever any discussion arises about the character of his neighbour or the nature of his God, ‘probably it has a sexual origin’, whereupon, having at best proceeded one thousandth part of the way towards the first cause, he ceases to exercise his imagination further. All that he has done, in his worship of catchwords, is to give to medieval fetishes twentieth-century names, and to set up new barriers against imaginative meditation. It is

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one of the functions of story-telling to break these barriers down, to unfreeze the imaginative stream, to enable it to flow again.

IV

The way in which a great story or any genuine work of art operates to this end is by an awakening of the aesthetic passion. What precisely the aesthetic passion is has been made excellently clear by a writer to whom every artist owes a great debt, Professor Alexander, in his 'Beauty and other Forms of Value.' It is to be carefully distinguished from the emotions provoked by the subject of a work of art. It is the emotion that springs from apprehension of beauty as such, or, to return to my previous line of thought, it is the perception of a universal within and behind the particular. What excites the spectator of a Greek statue of Aphrodite is not an emotion connected with its subject – not its precise resemblance to a woman, for neither in colour nor in shape does it resemble her as closely as many a trumpery piece of figure-painting exhibited in Bond Street; nor any erotic stimulus occasioned by it, for nothing is less erotic or more austere than a Greek masterpiece; nor any power of sentimental or religious association, for Aphrodite is not a goddess of ours. What excites him is not even an apprehension of the artist's technical mastery of his medium, for most men are ignorant of the difficulties and are therefore dead to the triumphs of carving. What excites him is, simply,

that the statue is a means of communication between him and the universals. So it is in other arts. They make man aware of the universals; they permit his imagination to flow; they uncurtain the window of that narrow room which is his mortal life.

This, it may be said, is a very dangerous process, unless there is a guarantee that his imagination will flow in the right direction. Is there any such guarantee? Certainly there is none that his imagination will flow in a direction that conforms with any given theory of conduct, and, from their own point of view, those conservative parents are fully justified who say that novels 'put ideas into young people's heads'. A story is not a moral agent; it is not an educational agent, and people who praise the drama as educational are praising it for its accidents, not for its essence; nor is art, as the later Tolstoy argued, an agent of utility. A great story is an imaginative flux – that is all. And that, in my view, is everything.

To examine the means by which a story acts as a flux would be to embark upon another and harder essay than this. I have already treated of this subject, in its relation to the theatre, in an essay on *The Nature of Dramatic Illusion*, and will content myself here with saying what may serve as an indication of a line of thought rather than a formal pursuit of it.

There is a distinction between doing the work of imagination for a reader and enabling his own imagination to flow. If I write in such a way

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that a reader feels that he is in the room I describe and that he hears the words I have set down on paper, I have done no more than create a perfect delusion – a difficult exercise in artistic naturalism, but one which does not entitle the performer of it to claim more than that he is a competent craftsman. But if, with or without perfect delusion, I can by the love story I tell liberate the reader's own imagination in such a way that he has, after reading my story, a livelier insight into love itself than he had before, if I can for a moment cause his own spirit to move across my page and inhabit a plane of reality of which formerly he has had but momentary and doubtful glimpses, then I am a great artist. I am, of course, so far as a particular reader is concerned, working in the dark. I do not know who he is; I do not know the nature of his imagination; I could not, if I would, work to produce a specified influence upon him, and I would not if I could. All that a story-teller can do is to see his own story as a glass through which the light of the universals appears to him, and to keep that glass clear. To keep it faultlessly clear is to write a masterpiece that endures from generation to generation; to allow it to be thick and continue to write is to produce hack-work.

There is a very happy instance of what I mean in *The Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, often called *The Golden Ass*. This book is for the most part an account of the adventures of one Lucius, the narrator, who was by magic turned into an ass. He served many masters,

and the chapters of his life have little connection except in his identity; they are, moreover, supplemented by anecdotes, short and long, which have nothing to do with the main story and, having probably done duty before the days of Apuleius, have served since as the basis of certain tales of Boccaccio. In the Elizabethan translation, the whole of Apuleius is exceedingly good to read, in much the same way that Fielding is good to read; but neither Apuleius nor Fielding wrote an aesthetic novel. They told delicious tales, they had a glorious power of invention, and they were, by remote implication, moralists, and these things in themselves seem to me a justification of having lived; but if anyone is disposed to attack Apuleius or Fielding – or Jane Austen for that matter – on the ground that they were what the abbess of Hohenberg depicted as 'idle story-tellers', I am not disposed to defend them. They do not, that is to say, find shelter within my special fortress. They have defences of their own; it would be arrogant and foolish to deny the title of 'artist' to them; but they are not, except on rare occasions, artists in the sense that they have power to communicate the universals. To this there is, in Apuleius, a sudden and brilliant exception. He breaks off from his main narrative to tell the story of Cupid and Psyche, and, while this interlude continues, the reader is translated to an imaginative plane altogether different from that on which he has been following the ass's adventures among robbers and courtesans. Hitherto, in reading,

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one has danced along on the plane of entertainment; suddenly at the names of Cupid and Psyche, an enchantment falls upon the tale and the reader's own imagination takes wing.

V

This, then, is the case for story-telling – not that it entertains or informs or educates, though it may do all this, but that it revitalizes the reader's perception of reality, it fluidifies his imagination of the universals, making him aware by intuition of the nature of things. Here the connection appears between story-telling and scientific research, between story-telling and religious aspiration. All three are ultimately concerned to discover the nature of things, and, in the discovery, to lead man, the discoverer, towards equilibrium and fullness of life. In *The Foundations of Aesthetics*, written in 1922 by Ogden, Richards and James Wood, these words occur: 'As we realize beauty we become more fully ourselves the more our impulses are engaged . . . Through no other experience can the full richness and complexity of our environment be realized. The ultimate value of equilibrium is that it is better to be fully than partially alive.' Gentile, in *The Philosophy of Art*, approaching the same problem from a different angle, for he will admit no reality external to the process of thought, nevertheless reaches this conclusion:—

'In a work of art the feeling is everything. For the feeling is the form

in which the subject matter is fused and transfigured . . . The critic who still distinguishes a subject-matter, with a value of its own, from the form with which it is identified, and from which alone it gets form and actuality, is still upon the threshold of art and has not the key to unlock the door. The truth is that, if the hymns live, the gods live too; they live in the hymns.'

And the late Poet Laureate said this:

'Beauty is the highest of all these occult influences,
the quality of appearances that thrue the sense
wakeneth spiritual emotion in the mind of man:
And Art, as it createth new forms of beauty,
awakeneth new ideas that advance the spirit,
in the life of Reason to the wisdom of God.'

The saying, 'Art, as it *createth* new forms of beauty, awakeneth new ideas' is, I think, open to misinterpretation. Beauty I conceive to be absolute and universal, an aspect of God. Art does not create beauty; it reveals beauty, the universal, by making statues, stories, pictures which have the effect of lifting the darkness, as it were a curtain, from the glass through which man sees. What Shelley said of poetry is applicable to aesthetic story-telling. 'Poetry', he said, 'lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world,' and he proceeded to argue – and his own poetry at its best and worst was rich in proofs of his

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argument – that ‘the effect of poetry is diminished in exact proportion to the strength of its moral aim’ So in story-telling. It must stand or fall as an instrument of pure imagination, as one of the means by which man is enabled, as Shelley says, ‘to imagine intensely and comprehensively’, as precisely that which Jerome thought it was not – a revelation of God because it is a

revelation of the nature of man. If we seek to defend it on the grounds of worldly utility, we shall fail, but if we believe that there is value in love, in poetry, in mystical apprehension, then our position is unassailable, for the value of story-telling is the same with theirs. It is a raising of curtains, an opening of windows, an admittance of light.

The Duel

by Nikolai Gubsky

THIS happened in Russia in those almost legendary pre-war times when the Tsar pretended to be all powerful, the Duma produced very long speeches, and the Ministries equally long circulars. They started writing circulars at about midday and wrote without interval till about seven. The smarter the Ministry, the later it opened: in the Foreign Office, for instance, you could not find a soul till after one, while in the shabby Department of Education pens began to scratch as early as eleven.

It was a dark December day, exceptionally dark even for Petersburg, and at midday electric light was burning in all the rooms of the Ministry of Agriculture.

One of the first to arrive at his office was Kanshin, a young man of

twenty-four, sturdily built, with a heavy gait, deep-set eyes, and a moustache that made him look older than he was. He passed to his seat, took from the shelf a thick volume with ‘Agrarian Law’ embossed on the cover and buried himself in it.

The work he had to do, – a memorandum on agrarian conditions in Bessarabia where the local law was curiously intertwined with the Napoleonic Code – was interesting; yet try as he might he could not get the hang of what he was reading, for between the printed lines and his mind there stood all the time a transparent shadow, the image of a slim tall girl in a fur cap, with serious grey eyes. Lydia, – it was only yesterday he had seen her off at the railway station, and yet how long ago it seemed now, after an end-

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less night spent in pacing up and down the room smoking innumerable cigarettes and futilely ruminating on what might have been but was not. She had been standing at the door of the carriage, saying something about her friend, the medical student, to whom she was going for a fortnight; and then she had fallen silent because she noticed that he was not listening to her but was absorbed in his gloom. Her look wavered then, she glanced away. The station bell rang. 'Well, good-bye,' she said in an uncertain tone, and the haste with which she stretched out her hand hurt him. 'Will you write to me?' he wanted to ask and could not, his voice would not obey him. He took her hand and did what he had never done before: kissed it. 'I must go now,' she whispered, gently withdrawing her hand, a look of confusion and pity coming to her eyes. For of course she had known all along that he loved her; and although she did not love him, something bound her to him and she could not dismiss him. It was a deadlock, a fixed state of misery, which had already lasted for a year and might last for another ten. . . .

'Hullo, old chap. Earning your daily bread?'

It was Tikonoff, 'Tit' for short, the *enfant terrible* of the office, a happy-go-lucky youth with raven black hair and mobile Southern features, Kanshin's bosom friend since school days.

'Lord, how sleepy I am,' announced Tit, settling down at his table next to Kanshin's. 'I wish someone would explain to me why we start at

that unearthly hour. Are we shop-keepers or what?'

He gave a hearty yawn, glanced with disapproval at a file of circulars before him and yawned again.

'Went to the Alcazar last night,' he continued. 'Quite a decent show. They've got a French girl there who comes on practically naked, and her figure is something marvellous,' with his hand he drew a voluptuous curve in the air. 'Why didn't you call last night? We would have gone together.'

'I couldn't,' said Kanshin dully.

'Why not? What have you been doing?'

'Nothing. Staying at home.'

Tit glanced at him critically.

'Staying at home,' he mocked him.

'Really, my dear, you ought to take care of yourself, you are getting impossibly gloomy. This life of a blooming hermit which you are leading, is not good for you. No wonder you get demoralized. What you want is a woman, it doesn't matter what woman, for they are all alike, I assure you. . . .'

'Oh, leave me alone,' growled Kanshin, who had heard all this dozens of times before. 'I must do some work now.' To show that he was in earnest, he pulled the volume nearer and propped his head on his palm.

Tit's best feelings were offended.

'Work!' he cried with indignation. 'Here I am giving you brotherly advice, and all you can find to say is: "Work." You are a pig, my dear, an ungrateful pig, and I won't waste my precious time on you any further.'

He turned away demonstratively,

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lit a cigarette, and for some time amused himself with puffing rings.

Another clerk entered the room, a lanky, dandified young man with a face that would have been handsome but for an ugly crease round his mouth which gave him a rapacious expression.

'Hullo, Maroff, steer this way,' shouted Tit, whose sociable nature resented even the smallest dose of loneliness.

Maroff came up and shook hands with him and Kanshin, pulling the middle part of his body as far back as it would go. In general, whether he stood or sat, his body continually wriggled in all its joints as though afflicted with a bad itch.

He sat down beside Tit and started telling him about a woman, Nina by name, whom both of them seemed to know rather intimately. He began in a whisper but as the tale proceeded his voice gradually rose so that Kanshin could not help hearing him. The reading of Agrarian Law became increasingly difficult.

'Just as I stepped out with her,' Maroff was saying, his hands describing a double spiral, 'whom did I see but Minnie, you know that little German creature who had pestered me in the autumn. "Now what do you want?" I asked her. "I must talk to you," she said. "We have nothing to discuss," I said and wanted to pass her, but she clutched at my sleeve and started blubbering. A most awkward situation,' he proceeded, his face aglow with satisfaction. 'There was Nina

standing on the porch, and people in the street watching us, and. . . .'

A shiver of disgust ran down Kanshin's back. The dislike he had always felt for Maroff now grew into a violent hatred. His hands tingled with the desire to hit out at the man, to hammer at his handsome self-satisfied face. He pressed his palms tightly to his ears, but the fascination of hatred soon made him release the pressure of his fingers and listen.

'It's incredible how they run after you,' Tit was saying, with frank envy.

'Isn't it,' Maroff beamed. 'And you know, I don't do anything to get them, they come of themselves. There was that Mary, for instance. I simply couldn't shake her off. . . .'

The bell rang. In a flash Tit's features rearranged themselves into that grave preoccupied expression which is the mark of a promising bureaucrat.

'The Director has come,' he grumbled. 'Always choosing the wrong moment. Now I'll have to take that damned circular to him.' He seized the file and hurriedly rummaged in it.

A feeling of relief descended on Kanshin: they would go now and leave him alone. He found the place in the book where he had stopped and read on. '*The officials of the District Land Commission are forbidden on pain of fine to disclose. . . .*'

'I say, Kanshin.'

He looked up. Maroff, having left Tit who was still busy rummaging in his file, was now addressing him. And once more at the sight of Maroff's fatuous face and his sensuous negroid lips

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twisted in a falsely affable smile, the poison of hatred coursed through Kanshin's veins.

'Was it you I saw last night near the railway station?' asked Maroff. 'You were driving in a sleigh with a girl. A charming girl, I must say. Who is she? I'm almost sure I've met her somewhere, only I can't remember. . . '

With a jerk Kanshin was up, a wild look in his eyes, his jaw working convulsively.

'You – you swine,' he muttered hoarsely. 'How dare you, you cur! And lowering his head he made a rush forward.

Fortunately Tit managed to intercept him. A short struggle ensued in the course of which a chair was upset and the circulars fell on the ground. Tit was thrown aside and bumped his head against the shelf. But the fit of fury spent itself in this preliminary effort: Kanshin stopped, glanced round him with unseeing eyes and quickly walked out of the room.

The next day Kanshin stayed at home. He had influenza, so he drank lots of hot tea with raspberry jam – the traditional Russian cure for cold of all kinds – and swallowed aspirin. He felt miserable because of the sordid affair of the previous day and because he longed for Lydia. He wrote a letter to her, a very long and very sad letter, but remembered that he had sworn to himself not to write to her, and tore it up. He smoked half a dozen cigarettes, all of them tasteless, and having proved to himself that one letter did not count,

had reached once more for the pen when Tit arrived.

Tit was in high spirits.

'Bravo, old chap!' he cried, fervently embracing his friend. 'It was a rare treat you gave me. Maroff was shaking in every limb; he had to drink a gallon of water before he could speak. And of course everybody got to know about it at once. In the Second Department when I came there they told me that you had been punching his face for half an hour. . . . But tell me, what was it all about? I didn't hear properly, and Maroff swears he only said that he had seen you driving with some female. Was it really all? He didn't say anything else?'

'No, he didn't.'

'Why then did you go for him? Surely there must have been something else.'

'But I tell you there wasn't. Simply the cad got on my nerves.'

'I see,' drawled Tit. 'Well, well.' He shook his head judiciously. 'In view of your pugilistic disposition I'd better not inquire further into the matter. But the point is this.' He changed his tone and became very earnest. 'You have publicly offended him, publicly, you understand? and that isn't a joking matter. He now demands of you a formal apology in writing or before witnesses. What do you say to that?'

'Nothing,' said Kanshin with annoyance. 'And please, Tit, let's not talk about it, it's too disgusting for words.'

'Does it mean that you decline to apologize?' insisted Tit.

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'Of course, I do. But Tit. . . .'

'Splendid!' cried Tit, throwing off his gravity 'I knew you would. And damn it all, why should you apologize. Serves him right, he is a swine with women and in general. Only why are you so glum? You ought to feel a hero and sing songs of victory, instead of which you look as though you were going to your own funeral. Cheer up, old pumpkin . . . Are you coming to the office to-morrow?'

'Of course not. I feel quite rotten.'

'Pity that, I was looking forward to your meeting with Monsieur Maroff. All right then, I'll tell him.'

And he did so on the following day. Maroff was greatly perturbed.

'What am I to do now?' he muttered, waving his arms about. 'I can't leave it at that, everybody has heard what he said. I must do something.'

'Knock him down when you see him next time.' The suggestion was prompted by sheer malice, since physically Maroff was no match for Kanshin. 'Or if you don't like that, you may challenge him to a duel. I really don't know what else you can do.'

'A duel! But it's preposterous.'

'Why preposterous? Better people than you have fought duels. You are a nobleman, aren't you? Well, *noblesse oblige*. Of course, if you don't mind him calling you a swine and a cur and a cad and so forth, then there is nothing to talk about.'

The idea of a duel had come to Tit in a flash of inspiration, but the more he pondered it, the more he

liked it. He consulted his friends in the Department. They realized perfectly well that in the circumstances a duel was sheer lunacy, but the starved romanticism in them clamoured for bloodshed; also it was a pleasure to see Maroff who was very unpopular, in a difficult position. The atmosphere in the Department became tense with excitement. Bunches of typists gathered in the dark recesses of the corridor arguing heatedly as to the relative offensiveness of the words Swine and Cur, and whether swords were not a nobler weapon than pistols. A junior of the Book-keeping Section implored Tit to allow him a sight of the combat; he would hide behind a tree, he said, and not be in anybody's way. The two middle-aged and heavily bearded clerks of the Inward and Outward Journals had an altercation on the subject of the shooting distance and would have started a free fight had not the Chief entered at the critical moment.

Maroff ceased to go about the Department since people openly sneered at him when he passed. He pretended to be very busy and sat at his desk writing mysterious letters - 'informing the police beforehand', said his colleagues maliciously. From time to time Tit came up to him, talked convincingly about the traditions of the nobility and reproduced with slight exaggerations the comments he had overheard. Kanshin was still at home with 'flu.

That state of affairs could not last long and on the fourth day Maroff authorized Tit to pass his challenge on to Kanshin.

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Tit was greatly pleased.

'I always knew you were the bravest of the brave,' he said. 'Only you won't go back on it, will you? Because with chaps like you one can never be sure. . . .'

He repaired to Kanshin's flat and found his friend lying on the sofa with a compress on his head.

'I have serious news for you,' said Tit solemnly. 'Maroff challenges you to a duel. Being the injured party, he has the choice of weapons and he has chosen pistols. Do you want me for a second? If so, I'm at your service, of course.'

Kanshin was dumbfounded.

'But you are mad, both of you,' he cried. 'Are we German students or what? A duel! Oh, God! And with that swine, too.' With a groan he sank back on the pillows.

'If you don't like the idea nothing prevents you from apologizing,' said Tit quietly.

'I am not going to apologize to that swine.'

'But, my dear, you have to do one thing or the other. You can't walk about assaulting people in broad daylight and then refuse to take the consequences.'

He put his hand on Kanshin's knee.

'Let's look at the matter from another angle. Suppose you decline the challenge, what then? For Maroff it'll be a triumph. "Ah, Kanshin is afraid," he'll say. . . .'

'Let him.'

'Let him, by all means. But every-

body else will say the same. I know that you aren't afraid, but they won't know it and the facts will speak against you. The facts! What will your position be then? And what about me? Do you think it'll be fun for me to hear all the idiots in the ministry calling you a coward? No, my dear, you can't refuse now; things have gone much too far.'

'Rubbish, rubbish,' moaned Kanshin, seizing his aching head between his hands. 'Have pity on me, Tit.'

But Tit had no pity where high principles were on stake. He quoted the duels that had been fought lately by officers of the Guards, he appealed to Kanshin's common sense, he invoked Kanshin's ancestors, he drew gloomy pictures of Kanshin's being expelled from the club, ostracized by society, his career ruined in the bud, his name made a synonym of disgrace. This went on for an hour and more. To every argument advanced by his friend he found a dozen counter arguments. And his vitality carried the day: he went back home with an acceptance of the challenge and unlimited powers to act as he deemed fit, whilst Kanshin stayed on the sofa writhing with headache and disgust at himself.

Tit set sternly to work. To begin with, the seconds had to be appointed. Tit chose as his assistant a certain Baron Nolken, an obese and taciturn young diplomat with pots of money and a perfect willingness to do anything to relieve the monotony of existence: the year before, in a circus he had

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entered a cage of tigers and stroked the most ferocious beast of the lot. 'It's a put up job, they are really quite harmless pussies,' he had declared afterwards. Over Maroff's seconds there was some delay. His friends in the Ministry declined that honour, partly to spite him, and partly for fear of punishment, so he had to put up with two nondescript lieutenants whom he had met in a house of bad fame and who on that occasion had borrowed fifty roubles from him. The lieutenants belonged to an obscure provincial regiment, and that greatly shocked Tit. 'For the gala day,' he said, 'I'll have to present them with clean collars and make them wash their necks.'

At first the meetings of the seconds took place in the office, at Tit's table. For the general benefit – the lieutenants, of course, forgot to pay their share – several duelling codes were purchased; they were duly examined and commented upon in a stage whisper. The clerks and the juniors strained their ears to catch what was being said; the messengers would take a peep through a crack in the door at Tit's wild gesticulation and agree that although Mr. Tikonov wasn't in the army, still he knew more about it than the rest of 'em. The Chief complained of slackness in work.

Things were more complicated than Tit had expected. The codes disagreed with each other. The lieutenants had no brains and would raise irrelevant questions. The Baron frequently missed the meetings, and a meeting of seconds is not valid unless

there is a full quorum. Also, the public curiosity was annoying in the long run. The meetings were therefore transferred to a restaurant where the food was fairly good and the wine not too expensive. At two in the morning the lieutenants would descend the staircase in perilous zig-zags, squeeze themselves through the wide front door and disappear in the frosty mist, while Tit having distributed royal tips all round would try to keep the Baron off the looking glasses, for in his cups the Baron developed a passion for smashing them. 'I hate seeing my face when I'm like that,' he explained.

Then the place of the duel. It had to be not far from the town and at the same time secure from an intrusion of strangers – not an easy thing to find in December with thirty inches of snow on the ground. One afternoon the four of them set out to a suburb where the Baron said he knew of a suitable clearing in the wood. They walked through an endless park, then left the road and took a path. Sinking up to their knees in the snow and stumbling over hidden tree trunks, they fought their way through some scratchy bushes first to a kitchen garden, then to more scratchy bushes. It was bitterly cold. Tit went blue in the face; he lost all feeling in the toes and spoke of imminent amputation. Finally they came to a fence. 'It's here, I'm sure,' said the Baron, but when they climbed over they found themselves facing a big factory. The Baron proposed to go back and start all over again, but that was too much for Tit: he said he had

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had enough of jungle life and must either have a drink or die of exposure. So they went towards the factory and entered the first inn they saw. High tea was ordered, with vodka instead of tea. Tit's sunken spirits rose: he danced a cake-walk with the Baron, sang gipsy songs and explored the anatomy of the buxom young woman who served them. When it was time to depart the Baron remembered that only an hour's distance from Petersburg he had an estate where there was room for a dozen duels. 'You are an ass,' said Tit with feeling. 'Why didn't you say so before?'

Then the pistols. They were terribly expensive, which was particularly annoying since after the killing they would be of no use to anyone. Here again the Baron came to the rescue. His father, it appeared, had a pair in his collection, but since father and son were not on speaking terms, the pistols would have to be stolen, which however was rather difficult since the old man was an invalid and never left the study where he kept them. The only time for getting them was in the morning when he was asleep, but then the Baron could never wake before mid-day.

And finally one of the lieutenants vanished, vanished completely. They waited for two days and then enlisted another lieutenant, an arrogant youth who pretended that only officers were qualified to deal with duelling, and had words with Tit on that score. Then the first lieutenant reappeared, telling a long story about some mysterious

lady of high birth whose honour he had been saving; but as there was a fresh bruise on his forehead, Tit surmised that he had been mauled in some orgy. There were five seconds now, and the fifth refused to go having discovered a clause in one of the Codes to the effect that 'once a second, always a second'. Tit had recourse to alcohol: after special treatment in a restaurant the fellow was reduced to a state of imbecility and made to sign a formal resignation.

'Things are getting settled,' Tit announced to Kanshin. 'At first Maroff insisted on a distance at which no one could hit a battleship, but his seconds told him they would thrash him if he did not give in, so he gave in. The Baron has tied an alarm clock to his bed post and swears to deliver the pistols to-morrow. The site is secured: and so is the doctor. True, he's a Jew and an ear specialist, but that doesn't matter since you'll miss each other in any case. You aren't afraid, I hope?'

'I'm not,' said Kanshin dully. 'Besides, I'm sure nothing will come of it.'

He proved to be right: nothing came of it, to the consternation of the whole Department. The Director, who had all the time been following with interest the progress of preparations, announced at the last moment that a duel would mean instant dismissal for everybody concerned. Maroff rushed to Tit for advice. In strict confidence he told Tit that he was married – a thing that no one suspected – married secretly from his

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parents; moreover his wife was just expecting a baby, and if in the name of Honour he had been prepared to risk his life, a dismissal was more than he had bargained for. 'Come, I'll introduce you to my wife,' he added, catching the gleam of incredulity in Tit's eyes, an invitation which Tit politely declined.

Tit was furious.

'What a mess! For a week I have been spending money on those unwashed warriors, and all to no purpose. It's your fault, why couldn't you hold your tongue. The least you can do now is to get me a hundred roubles. I'm absolutely broke.'

Maroff, who saw the importance of keeping his peace with Tit, procured the money.

'That's a little better,' grumbled Tit, pocketing the notes. 'Although, to tell you the truth, it's only a half of what I've spent on this idiotic affair.'

Kanshin that day was back in the office for the first time since his illness. Tit explained the situation to him.

'You might as well apologize to him now,' said Tit. 'He's had a good lesson. Go and tell him. Although, my dear friend, you are a scoundrel and a cad and so on, still I had no intention of hurting your feelings. Or something of that kind.'

'I'm not going to apologize.'

Kanshin was in his blackest mood. Lydia, it appeared, was back in town, yet she had not rung him up as she had promised. Of course she had simply forgotten. What was he to her?

Whether she saw him or not, made no difference to her. . . .

'Don't be a bloodthirsty crocodile,' continued Tit. 'Just consider what it all means to Maroff. If you don't apologize, his position will be untenable and he'll have to leave the Ministry. Serves him right, you'll say? Quite so. But then there is his wife. I admit she has chosen the wrong moment for producing little Maroffs, but we can't alter that, can we? I know your will is of iron and your heart of granite, but try to be human for once. Besides, what he had said to you wasn't so very offensive. I always thought that there was really no reason for you to lose your temper.'

'If you thought that, why the devil did you interfere?'

His remark stung Tit.

'Interfere!' he cried indignantly. 'Now, really, that's the limit. Here I've been sweating day and night to clear up the mess you've made, and instead of saying nicely: Thanks for all the trouble I have taken. . . '

'Thanks,' said Kanshin in his best sarcastic manner.

'Don't mention it,' Tit replied haughtily. 'I now wash my hands of the whole stupid business, so please don't ask me for help any more.' And he went to console Maroff.

An hour later Kanshin was called to the telephone. It was Lydia. She said she had come back earlier than she had expected; she was free that night and if he had nothing better to do would he come at eight as usual. 'My friend is not with me,' she added. Kanshin's

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gloom dispersed, the ice crust on his heart melted; he went to Maroff and, in the presence of a disappointed typist, apologized to him, dimly aware that by doing so he was trying to propitiate the wrath of some unknown deity.

In the evening he was with Lydia. He felt elated because he saw her, and miserable because the moment he met her glance he knew that she was and would always be inaccessible to him. He told her the story of his quarrel, leaving out its beginning and most of the details. The story thus mutilated became vague in the extreme; all Lydia could make out was that he had been nasty to a married man because she stayed away, and had realized his nastiness because she came back. But being a shy girl she refrained from asking any questions. 'Anyhow, it's all

right now, you needn't worry any more,' she said gently.

He sat with his head lowered, fingering a paper knife. How quietly she takes it, he thought. 'It's all right now' – and the case is dismissed. Just as if it were an episode in some old uninteresting book: as one reads one sympathizes – a little – with the troubles of the hero; but the moment the book is shut, the whole thing is forgotten, there is nothing more to say about it . . .

She saw that he was upset, and she would have liked to cheer him up, but she did not understand what it all meant and could not find the appropriate words. She gathered her shawl tighter about her shoulders and shrank into the corner of her armchair, a look of pity and confusion in her serious grey eyes.

Week In, Week Out

by H. W. Jones

I AM not a writer. I am an unemployed clerk living in a large Lancashire city. It is four years since I had a job, and if anyone can say when I am likely to get another, it will be news worth hearing. All I want to do here is just to put down something about the background of my existence during these years; it is the background of thousands of lives like mine, in this town and hundreds of others. So I have chosen two centres of unemployed men's daily life – the Labour Exchange and the public reading rooms – and shall say what I can about these. If I could I would like to say a great deal more.

I

The Labour Exchange stands in the centre of our town, to be convenient for everybody, and is better patronized than any other place: a summer sale at bargain prices in one of the biggest stores would not attract so much custom. On Tuesdays and Thursdays all roads lead here: these are 'signing-on' days. A thin trickle of men and women from the suburbs gradually grows into a steady stream as the city is approached; and in the

street leading to the destination it swells into a torrent

The entrance is in a side street, but the building, squat and ugly, stands in one of the main roads facing a church, which does not appear any more impressive. The church stands cold and aloof showing no sign of industry; but the clock in the tower is said to be reliable.

The Labour Exchange is not conspicuous except for the crowd of men and women standing outside, their air of listlessness and untidy appearance indicating the ravages of prolonged unemployment. Their helplessness is pathetic. The Labour Exchange can offer them nothing, but they seem loath to go away. It has a fearful fascination for most people: once upon a time one could get jobs there.

In order to enter the building most of them go up a flight of wooden stairs, and the rhythmic tread of countless weary feet from early morning until late in the afternoon sounds weird and sad, the music of hopelessness and despair. Besides the two floors above, the basement is in use, whilst the women have to go to the third floor. The interior is in comparative darkness, which helps to hide its bareness. On

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the walls hang notices of different kinds, most of them warning applicants for unemployment benefit of the penalties incurred by making false claims; then there is the modest Employment Gazette issued by the Ministry of Labour, stuck in a glass case like a relic at the Museum.

Directly above the long broad counters is a row of electric lights, but these do not penetrate the surrounding gloom, and men collect in the corners talking in whispers. The floor-space is considerable, but the building seems filled nigh to bursting with perspiring humanity, which gives an impression of smallness. The heat is intense; allied with the smell of disinfectant discharged into the atmosphere at frequent intervals it is physically nauseating. The struggle between men trying to get out and others wanting to get in, does not improve tempers already strained to breaking point. Much of the trouble is caused by those who have already 'signed on' remaining inside to talk to their friends, and the resulting congestion is terrific.

The first experience is disagreeable, but one soon grows used to it, especially on a Thursday or a Friday, which are pay-days, the 'bright spots' in a week of unrelieved gloom. When the box-clerk is slow and inclined to gossip too much with his neighbour, there is acute discomfort entailed in 'signing-on'. A fresh crowd assembles every quarter of an hour, and if the numbers are not kept down to modest proportions, a line two-deep, extending from the box to the opposite wall becomes a shapeless

and noisy queue of dangerous dimensions. There are at least fifty boxes in use, and it is the duty of each clerk to keep the unemployed on the move. A pause is disastrous. But there are some officials who continually put the machine out of gear, looking unconcerned when the 'ten-thirties' are still waiting to sign-on, although the hour is eleven, but, in their hearts, somewhat dismayed on hearing the angry voices of the 'ten-forty-fives' and the shouts of the 'eleven o'clocks', a confused swaying mass in the rear.

Punctuality is practised here with everybody present to sign-on at the time written on the yellow card, otherwise the dole is stopped for the day. No ill-will exists between clerks and unemployed except on rare occasions, when a clerk will try to be clever at the expense of one of the latter, which causes much unpleasantness. But this conduct is unpopular so far as modern officialdom is concerned, as the unemployed show great militancy; in one or two court cases arising out of assaults, the accused have been treated leniently. Moreover, a smack on the jaw hurts. Civility costs nothing. And it is absurd for the clerks to be too superior in their behaviour: their salary is not more than £2 10s. per week, and many are only temporarily employed. Tact can do wonders, especially as in most cases the unemployed will not be bullied by anybody, and expect to receive courteous treatment: if they do not get it, their displeasure is expressed in a manner equally offensive.

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When thrown out of work, the applicant for unemployment benefit has to be registered at the Labour Exchange, and this operation seems to involve red-taped officialdom in more trouble than anything else; indeed, the time wasted and stationery used must cost the tax-payer a pretty penny. Every morning at nine o'clock there are about a hundred men with their stamped unemployment cards waiting attention, with others arriving every minute, and they sit down on chairs looking tired and puzzled, gazing straight before them with two clerks sprawled over the counter writing as fast as they can. If it is expected that these two men can hold the tide in check, provided with a dozen forms to be filled for each applicant for unemployment benefit, then those responsible for the arrangement are lacking in imagination. The clerks grow fatalistic, and it is not unusual for one of them, when half a dozen cases have been dealt with, to escape upstairs for a smoke. But it would be ridiculous for a man to behave differently.

And not only have countless forms to be carefully filled in, but the applicant is supposed to be questioned exhaustively. Tempers become easily frayed. Apparently this is necessary, although it strikes us as meaningless. After waiting for three or four hours in a gloomy, stinking Labour Exchange, and being interviewed concerning matters of trifling importance, it is no wonder that the expression on the faces of the unemployed is intensely hostile. No man can stand stupidity

with patience when it seems to be so deliberate.

At twelve o'clock the clerks seem to wake up. The approach of the dinner-hour has the effect of dispersing the fatalism that afflicts them all morning. Moreover, several clerks, who have been wandering disconsolately about the building for the greater part of the morning, offer to give a hand whilst looking at the clock as if afraid it might jump out of the window.

The unemployed have to control their resentment as well as they can. If there should be a dispute with the clerk, it will not improve their position; as a matter of fact it will mean waiting longer for attention: the officials can do practically what they like, and abuse makes things worse for the unemployed and their dependants. This helplessness makes the men look thunderous.

At twelve o'clock all the chairs are occupied and men are collected along the walls filled with the gloomiest thoughts. Some of them are not strangers to the Labour Exchange, but they have failed to sign-on on account of an interview or sickness and this is regarded as a kind of punishment. Then there are others who have to make a fresh claim which is supposed to take place every six months. The reason for this practice is obscure unless it is another form of discipline.

Filled with despair, a man sinks so low that he ceases to be conscious of his own misery, and this feeling of hopelessness pervades the atmosphere of the room. Humanity is being crushed out of them, and in the dim

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light the tired worn figures look more like prowling wolves than men with visions and ideals. It is the degradation of a man which should arouse protest, and it fills one with dread of the future. How can this state of affairs possibly continue?

Men do not want money for nothing, and prefer to work for it so long as the wages are reasonable, but if they are to receive something to keep them alive, then it is about time it was made easier for them and more consideration was shown for their feelings: notwithstanding the poverty crushing them, they are still men – with a soul tucked away somewhere.

The vacancy department is situated on the second floor; it employs half a dozen clerks, who appear to be busy although there seems little occasion for it. They are often so occupied in talking to other clerks, who come in and go out like a rush of wind and gossip worse than any woman, and in filling in endless forms in various colours, that no time seems available for the unemployed, who are anxious to learn if there are any jobs going in their line. It must be said that, with a few exceptions, the clerks behave courteously, but the question arises as to what it is that occupies their minds so much that men are expected to queue up before the vacancy counter for twenty minutes or more before receiving attention? What are they there for? It is this casualness which creates a feeling of impatience.

No harm would be done if an arrangement could be made so that at

least one clerk was available to attend to inquiries whilst the others might wander over the building or have a smoke just as they felt inclined. As a rule, there are few jobs going; usually scab-labour. When an unemployed man pushes his yellow receipt card before the clerk, he does not expect to be offered work in his own line, but it serves as an indication of his readiness to take on anything rather than remain idle.

Perhaps it is stupid for the unemployed to bother over the vacancy counter, because any work available is supposed to be chalked up on a black-board hanging on the wall; but, as a lot of time is spent in speaking on telephones, there is just a chance that something has come through and no harm is done in making an inquiry. Anyway, the clerks should realize how desperate these men are and make allowances for it.

There is always a crowd of men collected near the vacancy counter, as the Corporation is supposed to communicate direct with the Labour Exchange should any labourers be required, and the men wait in the hope of hearing of something, refusing to go away when told that no work is available. A clerk is employed for the purpose of keeping the room clear, but so soon as one body of men is sent away, another group has formed elsewhere. It cannot be said that these men are work-shy. They are all untidily dressed, with pale and anxious faces. Their hopefulness is pathetic, especially as they make it a rule to call here every

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day, suffering disappointment each time.

The way labourers are engaged by the Corporation is open to grave abuse as, in most cases, many applicants are not considered unless belonging to a certain political club. Some men have been working on one job for four years, and, on its completion, have been unemployed for less than a month to be re-engaged by the Corporation, whilst other men, who have been unemployed for two years and more, have been denied the opportunity. Nothing has been done about it notwithstanding the complaints that have been made. In one case definite allegations were made against officials in the Labour Exchange favouring certain men in connection with corporation labour, but nothing has been done, except that the man responsible for the inquiry has failed to secure work as a labourer in the Corporation ever since that date.

Thursday is pay-day at the Labour Exchange; which affords a gleam of sunshine to the drab lives of the unemployed, and, even if the amount is small, there is a pleasant thrill in feeling the few shillings loose in the pocket or crushing a crisp pound note in the fingers, although it will soon be spent, and on Saturday there will be nothing left. When no thought is given to the debts that have to be paid, this idea of possession is delightful and creates in the mind a vision of prosperity which has no actual existence. But those without debt are the lucky ones.

The Labour Exchange is packed to

suffocation. the struggle is strenuous, as the unemployed have to sign on in addition to queuing-up at the pay-desk with the initialled pay-slip in their hands. If the pay-clerk is not quick enough, the queue grows unmanageable, assuming the appearance of a struggling line of men straggling over the building, breaking into box queues, and forming into the weirdest combinations imaginable. However, on pay day it is difficult to grow angry because there is something to look forward to at the end, even if waiting an hour for attention is not an unusual experience.

The reading-rooms of the public-libraries are deserted and the contrast is striking, when, during the week, the same rooms are filled with tired-looking men sitting in chairs gazing sullenly before them or crushed in a group round a newspaper stand. This is a time of modest celebrations, and those who do not draw any benefit seem to be conscious of this air of festivity. Friday also is pay day, but it is not treated with the same respect: by then the reading-rooms have filled in again and nobody is aware that anything out of the ordinary has taken place

Automatic machines are used to pay out the money, but this is a recent innovation. Formerly tough characters managed to push their hands under the grill, seize a bundle of notes, and escape into the crowd. The risk seemed a fair one, but few of them succeeded in evading capture. But the idea caught on, and the officials of the Labour Exchange began to look worried wondering what means could be

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adopted to prevent it. And, as an outcome of their deliberations, these expensive machines were installed, which suggests that, although many of the unemployed are apathetic, there are a few rebellious spirits who regard their situation in life as both stupid and inconvenient. The dog-track is popular, and the eyes of the bookies glisten at the mention of dole-day. Many of these unemployed men in the old days, never thought of backing a horse or a dog; but poverty breeds desperation, and the temptation to have a small bet in the hope of substantial profit is almost irresistible.

I I

The reading-rooms scattered about the city are the rendezvous of the unemployed. Often large and commodious, an unemployed man will enter them when he is tired of walking round the streets or loitering in the vicinity of the docks; but as a rule there is little provided for his entertainment, and the occupation most in favour is day-dreaming, which is not difficult to do if one is tired enough. But it's a question of mood and can't always be managed.

If it rains, hurried steps are made for the reading-rooms for shelter. Often the chairs are all occupied, and the unlucky ones have to drift round the room looking tired and miserable, hoping that a seat will soon be vacated. If it is spring, and not too hot, then it is possible to secure a seat and take an

interest in the wealth of human material available for observation. Much skill is required to study these men without offending them, because nothing creates ill-will more than this practice: their lives are sealed books, and tired eyes, weary limbs, hopeless gestures, are the only indications of the turmoil within them.

It is, therefore, an interesting hobby when the mood is there, but often the atmosphere of the place seems to crush all interest of this kind; one grows absorbed in a sort of weary contemplation. This indulgence is necessary, and, while it lasts, can be agreeable: the mind becomes a blank, the gaze transfixed, and all thought is suppressed. Waking up is the worst thing, because the capacity to think returns and that isn't pleasant.

One thing stands out, especially if an effort has been made to study the regular visitors of a reading-room: I mean, the steady deterioration in the men owing to long unemployment and ebbing confidence. It seems to be a wearing-down process, when individuality becomes lost and is absorbed in a grey multitude of drifting shadows.

Men recently thrown out of work possess a certain assurance which is absent from the others. A clean collar or a careful shave are points that attract attention, and then, as the period of idleness lengthens, a gradual transformation takes place, and little indications which suggest vanishing self-respect become evident. The man seems to shrink within himself, and his appearance grows dull and stupid.

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What might be called a gradual disintegration sets in, and will-power can do little to withstand its advance. If, in some cases, the process is slow, the end is not far distant. It is a question of time, and the sensation of utter resignation cannot be delayed for long.

There is a distinction between the down-and-outs and the unemployed, although it is not easily discernible. This can be explained by the fact that the dividing line is vague, as there are down-and-outs who occasionally indulge in a shave, just as there are unemployed who dislike soap and water. The difference lies in the attitude to life of these men, and this has to be observed attentively if it is to be seen at all. Without work an unemployed man is miserable and depressed, and seeks desperately for some form of distraction, whilst the down-and-out, as a rule, does not like work of any kind, and, when he enters the reading-room, it is in order to shelter himself from the rain or take a short nap. There are others, however, of a philosophical turn of mind: they like to sit very still in their chairs gazing up at the ceiling lost in profound meditation.

Perhaps it is a question of degree, because in time a man does grow unemployable through no fault of his own; his muscles grow flabby and his mind becomes unfitted for any mental effort. But when an unemployed man is married, with children to look after, he clings to his self-respect as long as he can; it is only when his wife becomes

disheartened and gives up the struggle that the man becomes apathetic also.

Until the pride has been crushed out of him, he maintains a certain poise, with the glimmer of hope in his eyes regarding the down-and-out with a mixture of pity and contempt, although his own appearance is not much better. These subtle class distinctions seem peculiar to all forms of society, but the poorer a man is the more he seems to cling to them, i.e. the idea of self-respect and class superiority. The only persons who appear to be unaware of this class distinction are the down-and-outs, and Nature mercifully conceals from them the knowledge of their own degradation.

The reading matter provided for perusal besides the newspapers is not interesting. Most of the journals in the rack are technical, and should be somewhere else, but there they lie untouched from one month to another. As if it were not plain enough from the beginning that this sort of thing was unsatisfactory for unemployed men seeking distraction of some kind! One cannot spend the whole time in day-dreaming. There are many periodicals which would prove interesting to the unemployed, and, if the Corporation is too poor to buy them, then an appeal should be made to generous-hearted citizens to pass on what they have read.

With nothing to read, and a disinclination to begin 'nodding', there comes a natural temptation to open a conversation with a neighbour, who, in a fit of desperation, is willing to talk to anybody should an opportunity be

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provided. This, however, is suddenly interrupted by the appearance of an attendant, looking very hot and bothered as if some great crime was about to be committed. But nobody is ever angry over this treatment, because there is little to talk about besides football and the wickedness of the Means Test, although conversation does create a friendly atmosphere, which is desirable when it is raining heavily outside and the air of the room is deadening. This readiness to be snubbed by an ill-tempered library attendant, who does not know how lucky he is to be working, indicates the acceptance of a condition which offers no hope whatsoever. One is not supposed to speak. Silence must be preserved at all costs. But what is to be done if a man has nothing to read, dare not open his mouth, and is too worried and depressed to indulge in his favourite day-dreaming? (In one reading-room a group of deaf and dumb men is in the habit of collecting round a table near the door; they make up for the moodiness of the others by waving their hands excitedly, pinching one another on the arm, with queer noises coming from their mouths. The attendant eyes them surlily and does not know what to do about it.)

But it would be unfair to say that everybody is resigned, because fortunately there are several bright spirits who wage a fierce and relentless war against the authorities regarding their secret activities, with relish to be enjoyed to the utmost. Racing papers are brought in, and form is studied with intense interest, the single printed sheet

being placed on top of an open copy of the *Photographer* or the *Engineer*, and, if not already acquainted with these practices, one would marvel at the thirst of these men for the higher forms of knowledge. Day-dreaming is cheaper, of course, but there are peculiarities in the mental condition necessary for this indulgence. Racing is not a bad substitute, but, when poverty is at the door, a man's luck flies out of the window. Nevertheless, the *Sporting Express* does conduce to day-dreaming, even if it can offer nothing else.

At the central reading-room the back-pages of the newspapers, which include the advertisements, are fixed on a separate board, and from the time the place is open until late in the afternoon, clerks collect round them, looking through the advertisement columns with a slip of paper in one hand and a pencil in the other; but it is rare that anything is written down.

Most of them are old men wearing faded trousers, frayed at the bottoms though carefully creased, and outworn bowler-hats. There is something neat and tidy in their appearance which is arresting, but hollowed cheeks and sad eyes reveal much suffering. Notwithstanding their destitution, they have a dignified bearing, considering themselves above the ordinary working man present in such large numbers in the room, failing to realize that unemployment has afflicted them all and in this common misfortune nobody is better than anybody else. The vanity of these men makes their plight seem more pitiable, especially when it is

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remembered that none of them is likely to find work again. They are too old. The firms that once employed them have ceased to exist; or drastic economics have been called for, with the result that the old ones have been dismissed and the younger generation has taken their place. Thirty years or more of faithful service does not count for much.

If an advertisement likely to suit them is seen, hope glimmers in their eyes, the box number is carefully noted on the slip of paper, which is replaced in the pocket, and then, with a satisfied mien, gently avoiding dock-labourers and other such persons wearing mufflers, they pass through the outer door, and are seen no more – until the following day.

The young unemployed clerks are well dressed, in marked contrast to the untidy appearance of most men in the room. It is expensive keeping them in good clothes, and mothers have many anxious nights thinking of the prospects of their sons, with little money coming into the house and bills to be paid, and with the further thought that a costly education has not helped them to find work, and fathers must support children for whom the country has no use. Seldom are these young men conscious of their plight, as their position has always been the same, and they have walked the streets since leaving school or college four years ago and more. It is when a man was once in regular employment, and has now a wife and children dependent on him, that his present situation causes him sleepless nights and days of unrelieved gloom. But to the younger generation the

dignity of labour is an incomprehensible term, because so few of them have ever worked. However, it is only proper that the advertisements in the newspaper should be looked at although it is a waste of time

Down-and-out actors and chorus girls come along on Thursdays and Fridays to look through the advertisements in *The Stage* and *The Era*, which are placed in a rack facing the door in big red covers, in company with the *Catholic Times* and *The Universe*. The papers are published on a Thursday, when the competition to secure them is intense; potential Hamlets prowl round the reading-room scowling ferociously in search of *The Stage* or *The Era* missing from the rack

The actor is unmistakable. He has no sense of delicacy. He will promptly approach someone in temporary possession of the paper, tapping him on the shoulder and urging him in a stage whisper to hurry up as others are waiting. Some think this practice is much beneath their dignity, and prefer to sit facing the offending party, regarding him so intently that, in a fit of desperation, he meekly surrenders the sheet.

Chorus girls never bother to wander round the room, but sit in a chair looking very pretty, and the attendant comes over to them with a fatherly smile on his face asking what he can do. He is told that they want to see *The Stage*, so he goes round the place looking for it, and, when he brings it to them, they smile at him daintily and the poor man, overcome with confusion, rushes away. Their

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presence is appreciated, and helps to brighten things, but they do not stay long as they have other engagements

On a Friday there are numerous old Irishmen with tired gentle faces, mostly from the doss-house, in search of *The Catholic Times* or *The Universe*, the contents of which are devoured eagerly. There are advertisements at the back, and timid servant girls enter in order to look through them, but, if the papers are not in the rack, the expression of hope fades away, and they slip quietly outside without troubling further.

There are many interesting types, too numerous to mention, and it would appear that, when a man is destitute for a long time, his brain is affected, and his behaviour is often eccentric – in the sense that he loses his self-respect and takes a solitary path of his own. Respectable people always imitate one another and are never interesting to watch: comfortable jobs make most men hypocrites.

The 'umbrella man' is liked by everybody. He is always tripping over his umbrella, and it is surprising he should bring it with him because it is full of holes. He cannot see very well, and forgets where he has put his glasses, so he stands in the middle of the floor and tears roll down his withered cheeks because he hates to think that his sight is failing and his brain is so easily fuddled. He is a slight shrivelled figure and walks very rapidly. There are several shelves on the left full of books which have been there for the past seven years, ever since the place was opened, and he has

read every one of them so that, when a new book appears on these shelves, he grows very excited, dropping his umbrella on the floor and examining its pages with great eagerness. If somebody is reading a book when he is passing by, he will stop, bend down, and, in a whisper, remark what a fine book it is. 'The umbrella man' is always rushing about and he never seems to reach anywhere although he tries hard enough; but he will not have long to wait now.

Then there is the armchair critic, a stout little bandy-legged man with a dirty trilby hat and a long mackintosh touching the ground. His pockets bulge with newspapers, pens and pencils stick out of his waistcoat pockets. He is easily excitable, and speaks so fluently that it is often hard to understand him. When he enters the room, he immediately rushes to the newspaper stand. But he does not stay there long as his indignation is soon roused; instantly he sits down at the writing desk and pens a letter of protest to some person who has offended him in the morning paper.

Most prominent people must receive a letter from the armchair critic at one time or another, but whether these communications make any impression on them is doubtful. But he perseveres in thinking that he is fulfilling a great mission in life. There is no doubting his sincerity. This is the one motive force in his life, and if there was nobody to whom he could write a dignified letter of protest the world would cease to interest him. And no wonder that the poor fellow is easily

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aroused and writes so many letters! To read a newspaper it would seem that the world is doing very nicely and nobody need have the slightest anxiety!

There are some with a taste for poetry who sit down, provided with pencil and paper, and copy long portions from a book. The standard is not very high. For instance, there is a gentleman with the face of a pugilist who is fond of taking down long extracts from *Punch* because some of the jungles give him great satisfaction; but he seems to be the only person who thinks that *Punch* is intended to amuse people; so he is looked upon as a curiosity.

When the *New Statesman* makes its appearance on a Saturday morning, a communist intellectual is always busy with his pencil writing in the margin; and his criticisms are usually more interesting than the printed article. But he is a gentle soul with a knowing smile on his face; his worst habit is spitting on the floor, and he knows it is bad manners because his eyes wander round the room in search of the attendant before he does it.

But the principal attraction is the racing newspapers and, although they are banned from the reading-rooms and an attendant is continuously walking round to see that this is enforced, men manage to read them in comparative safety. The knowledge which some of them must possess concerning horses must be considerable, and it is saddening to reflect that this can never be used profitably, and the petty gambling they can afford to indulge in simply drags them further into the mire. But

it keeps the mind busy. The tragedy is that so much energy is allowed to go to waste in this fashion when it could be used to increase the wealth of the community. This appeal to the cupidity of men can never be done away with until society recognizes its obligations and provides work at good wages. There are too many parasites living on the working-class which the country cannot possibly afford to keep any longer in luxurious idleness.

The dull lifelessness of these men must conceal a variety of emotions and one has a suspicion that there lies within each one of them a feeling of burning resentment which might be fanned into flame at any time. Of course they look dirty and unkempt and seem beneath contempt, but, driven to desperation, it is possible for a great deal of damage to be done before the police crush them under with their batons. There are so many of them. At the moment they have insufficient courage and are waiting for a leader to come along to give them fresh confidence.

Notwithstanding the grinding poverty they are compelled to endure, there is a determination to live and nobody knows when an outlet will be found for the indignation that consumes them. Perhaps it is preferable to accept the view that they are content to drift along rather than take the matter too seriously. But the fact remains that if the shock comes it will be all the more disagreeable, and have in it that element of surprise which is necessary for the success of any undertaking.

The Song of the Scythe

by Douglas Boyd

ON the grassy wayside, dividing the dusty road from the hawthorn hedge, the mower pauses for a moment, resting on the long curved handle of his scythe.

He is rather short, but well built. His shoulders have an extraordinary breadth, and the muscles of his broad hairy chest ripple as his body sways with smooth, measured motion upon his hips. The knees of his trousers are tied with thick string, making the bottoms bell-mouthed over his heavy boots. From a shirt rolled high above the elbows his arms thrust out, long and muscular as an ape's. His features, coarsened by wind and rain, darkened by the sun, are not ill-looking, and his chin is square and his eyes are a merry blue.

The sun beats down heavily on his uncovered head. His brow shines with sweat. Traffic on the road passes him but he gives no need to it, though clouds of dust swirl about him and settle like white powder on him and on the mown grass and nettles. From over the hedge come the sound of a binder in the corn-field, the dull thud of horses' feet, the rattle of harness, the hoarse cries of the driver.

In the gutter a tramp stops to

pick up a cigarette-end, peers at it for a second beneath bushy eyebrows, then secretes it carefully in his ragged coat. The mower straightens his back and re-sharpens his scythe, throws the tramp a careless glance, and turns afresh to his task. His strong arms swing the blade in steady, half-circular sweeps, his body swaying with it, his blue eyes following the pointed tip. It cuts through the long grass and sings as it cuts. *Sweesh-a . . . sweesh-a . . . sweesh-a*. And as it sings, he sings with it in a pleasing voice:

'Old Man Time he hath a scythe,
He cuts both short and long. . . .'

The long blade flashes. *Sweesh-a . . . sweesh-a . . . sweesh-a*. Dark, stray poppies, coloured cups upturned to the sky, stagger, fall backward over the steel and lie like blood upon the ground.

'With horny hand he takes his tithe,
And sings the mower's song.'

Sweesh-a . . . sweesh-a . . . sweesh-a. He works gradually toward a group of elms, reaches them, and continues beneath the cool shade their leafy arms throw upon him and over the road behind him.

At the sound of his voice a rook caws

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loudly, flutters its wings in the top-most branches, and flaps away to a neighbouring copse. A small twig topples and falls in an almost silent passage downwards, and taps him smartly on the head. He brushes it off sharply and as he does so turns to the road. A stoat, its neck well-arched, its sleek body so fair as to be nearly the colour of the dust, is crossing from the other side. A slight excitement fills him, his nostrils twitch, and with a new and deadly purpose he raises his scythe a few inches above the ground; then crouching a little, he watches the animal's queer, noiseless movement, and the muscles of his arms become taut.

Reaching the verge the stoat vanishes into the grass. The mower waits, listening to the creeping body as it nears him. Like a stab of light the blade suddenly sweeps along the surface, shearing grass and faded hemlock, laying bare the brown earth. But the flash and the leap are as one. There is a slight rustle in the field beyond and then silence.

That silence is shattered by his sudden roar of laughter. He shakes a formidable fist in the direction from which the last faint rustle came. Stooping quickly, he picks up a stone and throws it with great force over the hedge. It cuts through the still-standing corn with a swish like that of his scythe, but the aim is hurried and uncertain, a reluctant admission of defeat. With a sharp metallic ring stone strikes on stone, but far beyond its reach the stoat has paused, its swiftly panting belly low upon the ground.

Thirty yards away the grass-covered waste land beside the road runs down into a deep hollow, screened by bush and bramble. The earth has been beaten down by many feet, and here and there are evidences of many a wood fire. Little bits of charred twig and large round patches of grey ash. An old coat, torn and frayed, is rotting where it has been carelessly thrown, and one old boot bears it company.

The tramp has vanished from the road. He has filled a tin with water from the stream in the ditch on the other side, and in the hollow he is stooping over scattered ashes, arranging charred twigs and adding a few dry sticks. Everything to his satisfaction, he stands up, his dirty fingers wandering through his coat. A look of perplexity, and he rubs a stubby jaw with a grimy forefinger.

The mower has picked up his scythe and is examining the point. Having made sure that it has suffered no damage, he draws a whetstone from his trouser-pocket and once more sharpens the shining blade.

'Have you a match you can oblige us with?'

He turns sharply. The tramp is standing barely three paces away, his approach having been almost as soft as that of the creeping stoat. Without a word the mower throws him a box of matches, and with a muttered 'Thanks' the tramp returns to the hollow. Thin coils of white smoke begin fitfully to rise above the tops of the bushes.

The clatter of the binder has ceased and a strange quiet has settled upon

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the land. From north and south and east and west, over hill and valley, comes the striking of church clocks, sounding one after another, as if impish hands had mischievously set them in motion. Picking up his jacket from beneath a tree, the mower leisurely turns toward the hollow. The tramp's face is expressionless as he returns the match-box; although only two spent matches lie upon the ground, at least a third of the contents has gone.

But the mower is in good humour. Shaking the box to indicate his knowledge of the theft, he laughs boisterously, turns around like a huge dog seeking a resting-place, and throws himself on the ground beside the fire. From one capacious pocket he produces a brown paper parcel containing half a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese, and from another a bottle of beer. The tramp pretends to ignore these preparations of his uninvited guest. He thrusts his hand into his coat and draws forth a small grease-proof packet. Taking out a thick slice of white bread he shoots the rest of its contents, a number of bacon bits, into the large flat lid of a toffee tin and pushes it into the fire, where the water in the other tin is already boiling. Into the little cloud of steam he pours a small, measured quantity of tea leaves, and stirs them with a thin stick. The bacon begins to sizzle in the lid. Its aroma rises with that of the beer, is wafted over the hedge and mingles with the scent of honeysuckle.

The mower leans back upon his jacket, drinking his beer and eating his bread and cheese; the tramp reclines

among his tins, the abandoned boot and scraps of old papers scattered about him, drinking his tea and eating his bread and bacon bits. The flames of the wood fire are vague and shimmering in the heat of the mid-day sun.

The tramp gazes meditatively at the crackling twigs.

'It was a very crool thing to do '

'What?'

'The stoat,' says the tramp briefly.

'What about it?'

'What you did.'

'I tried to kill it,' says the mower.

'Why?'

'Oh . . . I don't know . . . ' the mower drawls lazily. 'It's not the first time I've killed a stoat that way. And not only stoats, neither. Rats, too, and field-mice.'

'Why?' persists the tramp.

'Why not?' parries the other.

'They do *you* no 'arm. An' that way, too.' There is a faint tinge of scorn in his voice.

'Don't you be so squeamish. I guess you've snared a rabbit and knocked it on the head, more than once.'

'I ain't never snared no rabbit. When yer live like I do, out in the open all the time, yer get ter kinder like wild things. They're like *you*, yer see. Out in the open all day an' night, wiv not a soul ter care about yer. Got ter live the best way yer can, an' find yer own food—or starve. They live out in the same woods, sleep in their holes under the same stars an' sky, an' warm themselves in the same sun, an' shelter under the same wet leaves. I

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don't want no rabbits ter eat, or ter kill stoats fer nothin'. I buy two penn'orth o' bacon bits – when I can.'

'Everything's got to die sometime or another,' jeers the mower; and begins to sing:

'Old Man Time he hath a scythe,
He cuts both short and long. . . '

'That's old Tiggs's song,' he goes on. 'He's mowing a mile or more further down the road, near my cottage. It's his song; leastways, he sings it, and he may have wrote it for all I know. He taught me it years ago, he did, when he first showed me how to handle a scythe.'

'God the growing, he the mowing,
The good un's and the wrong'

But the tramp is finished; his power to express views on the cruelty of taking life unnecessarily is exhausted. From a hidden corner in his coat he extracts a few cigarette-ends. Turning them over in his palm he chooses the longest, to which he holds the glowing end of a twig from the fire, and puffs it into life. Contentment steals over his face as he picks up a sheet of an old newspaper. . . .

The mower leans back against the bank and closes his eyes. . . .

From over the fields a distant clock strikes the hour of two – its chimes are faint once more; the agitated chatter of the rooks greets the binder as it clatters its way towards them; beyond the bushes and the bramble and the slender leafy saplings, high up on

the road and amid its cloud of dust, a motor hums and passes. The mower stirs and opens his eyes to the blue sky above him, and the smell of earth and grass and sorrel assails his nostrils. He rises with a yawn, lifting his closed fists high above his head; then, gathering up his jacket and his scythe, he climbs up from the hollow and makes for the tall elms beneath which he left off mowing

Beside the dying fire, its wreaths of white smoke gently swaying upward, the tramp has already bestirred himself. Picking up the old boot he inspects it carefully. The upper, with the exception of the toe-cap, has been cut away, but the sole and heel are serviceable. Holding it in his right hand he uses it as one would a stick, pushing aside the tall grass and nettles and peering among the bushes. With a grunt of satisfaction he espies its fellow in the bramble and, withdrawing it, finds it cut down in the same way. They are like a pair of clogs. He glances at his own boots with sudden distaste, and seating himself upon the bank removes them, thrusting his toes into the toe-caps of the others. They seem to fit. They are more comfortable – like slippers. They look better. A slight vanity stirs within him. He stamps this way and that. He is pleased.

The mower has started again . . . *sweesh-a . . . sweesh-a . . . sweesh-a . . .* a pace at a time, his body swinging with perfect rhythm. Far into the afternoon he works, unceasing, until the verge is almost shorn of its covering, and the sinking sun spreads a soft warm glow

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over the face of the earth. He takes the whetstone from his pocket and with quick strokes draws it up and down the blade. But suddenly he stiffens, his body leaning slightly forward. He hears not the dull thud of hooves, not the driver's hoarse 'Whoa!' For, disturbed by the rattle of the binder, a startled rabbit has left the corn. Unaware of the mower, it has flashed through the hedge and taken cover in the remaining tall grass on the verge. Breathing gently, it creeps through as did the stoat, but it is bigger and the tops of grass and poppy and nettle sway at its approach.

Now the scythe does not sing. It is like the hiss of a snake. The sweep is wide and long-reaching, the plunge of it almost unbalancing. A small, sharp cry of agony – and the poppies among the shorn grass show sudden scarlet beside the real red blood.

The feat delights him. His blue eyes shine and he laughs happily as he lays down the last of the grass with a few quick strokes. Then, wiping his blade and whetting it sharp and clean again with the stone, he hoists it over his shoulder with his jacket through the stay, picks up the rabbit by its soft, slender body, and steps down into the hollow.

Well, the tramp's a sham, a liar. He'd been in no hurry to leave – was here a few minutes ago. Will the chap be too squeamish to accept a rabbit when it's offered to him? . . .

But the tramp has vanished. Beside the grey ashes lies a pair of discarded boots, old and cracked and shapeless.

Quickly he runs up to the road, but the tramp is nowhere in sight. His cheery 'So long!' to the binder's driver, whose head appears above the hawthorn hedge, brings forth a husky response. He walks with a steady stride, his eyes searching the road ahead, until, a quarter of a mile away, he sees his cottage. The tramp has just reached it. The mower hastens, but the tramp, after a slight hesitation, passes. Beyond the cottage, too, is Tiggs, the old hand, still mowing with his steady, practised stroke. His voice comes softly over the distance:

'Old Man Time he hath a scythe
He cuts both short and long . . .'

A sudden interest is kindled in the eyes of the mower. Something is happening, something unexpected – strange. His wife has appeared in the doorway, and another woman, too, trying to restrain her. But his wife thrusts her aside and rushes forward to meet him. Her face is white, her eyes are hard.

He looks at her with wonder.

'The child,' she says, stonily. 'The lorry ran over her legs. She's dead.'

But the mower does not see her, nor old Tiggs either, nor the tramp beyond, slouching along the gutter in his rags. A little breeze rustles like a ghost along the hedgerows, gently bearing with it the song of the scythe: 'Both high and low must take the blow, The weak un's and the strong.'

Transfixed, he is staring stupidly at the furry, dangling legs of the rabbit in his hand.

The Amazons

by George Barker

PALLID the mirages, the palaces
Appearing brilliant on the mountain tops, pale
The whispering sibilant fields and pale
The phantasmal countenances female
Haunting our progress: in all climactic places
Appear the brilliant the distraught and pallid faces.

Hanging from lemon trees like failing masks
They moan in the slight gales, and conversing
In wordless language may be rehearsing
The prologue to posthumous and terrible tasks:
Their spectral movements to forward for ever versing
As we approach, our beings in death's risks.

For ever discerned, as through a river
The aqueous and sinuous perform,
Their faceless bodies sway through a warm
Miasmal haze like many imagined elver:
In their hypnotic grace the foot and arm
Repeat in movement the siren's bonding quiver.

They are the ambush, and are the hauntresses.
They are the Amazons of the land Unbeing.
I am in hourly fear, there is no flying
Their incursions upon the spirit's stresses;
The eye cannot turn from them, and once seeing
As they indeed are seen, fourfoldly fear presses.

From our walls' otherwise plain faces
Stretching on either side birth and death's distances,
Their visages, flown from their bodies, palely suspend;

The Amazons

Strange sporran, on loins; and within the dark places
Of the heart these speechless countenances
Iterate in silent language of our end.

.

Death's Amazons! We hear their heavy laughter
Ironically echoing down the colonnade
Of seven columnar decades swathed in shade,
Of brittle and intermittent light, but darker after
The traversing we find the glade.
Into which we are beaten by their clashing laughter.

Without action they strike, they compel
Like upright beasts, men into that shambles
Death's press of blood and earth; we are not able
With weighted arms their phantoms to repel;
Their darkening presences are untouchable,
Their onset is like death irrefutable.

Queen Masters! Lying under the hills
Of my home, concealed beneath the sun,
– Gold man, king – I sense like one
Lost in an alien land how your presence fills
Whole atmospheres like thunders, and on
My shoulders your compulsion falls.

Hewn on to mountains and assumed in the stars,
By ominous storms daubed, shown through oceans,
Drawn in the strong line of the cormorant's motion,
Limned in nations and blasted from wars
Hovers, to one face gathered, their thousand
Countenances, gazing from ocean, star and mountain.

I can obey no other deathward head
But theirs: the pressure of their hand
Upon my shoulder and desires disband,
And hope, courage: the silence of their unsaid
Order, and I must seek further land,
Find whole subjection to them with the dead.

Blackpool Panegyric

by James Laver

I

THE dream of a City of Pleasure is part of the permanent furniture of the human mind. For the countrymen, in an age when the vast majority of mankind herded their flocks or followed the plough, almost any city would do, for all cities have had their pleasure quarter, often of a somewhat disreputable kind, and the wandering Bedouin dreamed of Tyre and Damascus as the modern Alaskan miner dreams of Dawson City – places where there are lights and music and dancing, food and drink and the shifting kaleidoscope of the crowd. As more men lived permanently in cities, the cities of every day seemed to them less attractive, and they began to imagine other cities in which no one did any work save such as was necessary to minister to the enjoyment of others, where every day was a holiday and life a continual round of enjoyment. Such cities were actually established but, like all good things of the Ancient World, they were intended only for the few.

The Middle Ages, in spite of their feudal structure, were more democratic. Even quite humble people found it possible to go on pilgrimage, and if the reason of their journeying was to visit a

shrine no one who understands human nature at all can doubt that the expedition was a pleasant one, and that the holy day was also a holiday. Even the things they brought back with them as trophies or relics bear the oddest resemblance to the objects which modern children bring in triumph from the seaside. But very few shrines were situated on the coast, for miracles are apt to happen in the most unexpected and unsuitable places, and so the pilgrims did not always return from their wanderings any better physically than when they set out, except that any agreeable journey had a tonic effect.

Even in the eighteenth century, when the pursuit of health was substituted quite frankly for the religious motive, people went inland, mostly to natural springs of medicinal waters, no longer drunk for their supposed connection with some saint, but for their chemical properties, although faith, no doubt, still played a prominent part in the cure. Charles II transferred his Court to Tunbridge Wells, Beau Nash established his at Bath; it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that health-seekers and holiday-makers discovered Brighton.

Blackpool Panegyric

This discovery, that the neighbourhood of the sea was pleasant, was a fundamental change, and we have grown so accustomed to its results that we are apt to forget how fundamental it was. To earlier ages there was something terrifying about the sea. If you were a fisherman of course you were compelled to live upon its margin, and seaports must need be on the sea, but otherwise what was there to attract the visitor? The land was frequently poor and mixed with sand, the trees bent by the gale and sometimes stunted by an air impregnated with salt. If you look at almost any old house established near the sea you will find that it turns its back upon it. All its pleasant rooms look inland; the sea is relegated to the backyard, a convenient cesspool for human rubbish.

It was the Romantic Movement that brought the sea into favour just as it taught men that mountains were something more than 'horrid' obstructions, barren interruptions to the fertile and smiling plain. The Romantics began to admire the sea. Wordsworth wrote a sonnet upon the beach at Calais and Byron found that

'There is a rapture on the lonely shore.'

But even Wordsworth, pacing upon the beach, was thinking of something else, and one is left doubting whether Byron himself was not praising the loneliness of the shore rather than the shore itself. When he and the men of his generation wanted a health resort, they went to Pisa – of all places on the inhabited globe!

One is left wondering whether,

after all, it was not the proud poets who discovered the sea, but ordinary people, fathers and mothers of families cooped up for most of the year in great cities and anxious for a breath of fresh air in their congested lungs. It was they who made an even more important discovery. the discovery of Sand.

Sand has been insufficiently praised; indeed the writers of former ages seem to have gone out of their way to say rude things about it. It was barren – so much was evident to the meanest intelligence; and it was shifting – not at all the kind of foundation on which a wise man would build a house. The admirable art of pile-driving had not yet been invented in Biblical times, or the sacred writer would have realized that it is often safer to build a house upon the sand than upon any rock near which the sea can practise its corrosion. Then, it did not keep the imprints of one's feet for longer than the next tide, and vain endeavour was likened to the writing of one's name upon the sand. Now that the world is more overcrowded this too seems a blessing – this vast slate on which men can write every day, on which babies can build castles and picnic parties – alas! – strew paper and orange peel, but which is always clean next morning, as clean as on that primeval morning when man was as yet unheard of and the footsteps even of the megalosaurus made no lasting impression. True, Isaac was pleased to know that his descendants would be as the sands of the sea for number, but even he was thinking of dry sand.

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Wet sand is the new delight for so long undiscovered; sand not so wet that the foot sinks into it, nor treacherous with hidden quags, but sand just wet enough to lie smooth and firm as a road of asphalt, yet unresistant to a baby's spade. This marvellous substance might have been manufactured for the pleasure of children, as, perhaps, in the infinite economy of the Universe, it was. Smooth, shelving sand, which remains firm even under water, which will build up into the almost vertical wall of a rampart, and take and keep the austere outline of the mud-pie; sand without a pebble to cut the tender soles of infant feet, sand hard to the tread but soft to fall on, offering no resistance to the cricket stump but holding it firmly erect once it is inserted, sand the best and safest playground in the world

One of the great advantages of the beach at Blackpool is the absence of groynes. I know some shores which are so heavily groyned that there is hardly any beach left and riding, which demands no more perfect track than a long stretch of sand, becomes difficult and even dangerous. Level shore, free from obstructions, is the ideal place for riding, just at the edge of the water, with the incoming waves washing the horses' hoofs which leave behind them, as they gallop, not a cloud of dust but a burst of spray. But one never quite gets over one's childish conception that the ideal mount for the seashore is not a horse at all, but a donkey. Those patient, heavily caparisoned creatures that stand in a ring with their noses to-

gether waiting to be hired, seem as natural on the sands of the shore as on the sands of the desert. I have only one grievance against donkeys: it was a donkey that first shattered my faith both in human and asinine nature. For the donkey-man told me that if I paid sixpence instead of the ordinary tuppence, I could take the donkey off by myself and ride him as far as I liked. In imagination I was already at Fleetwood and St. Anne's; I agreed joyfully, paid out half my fortune and mounted. I did not know that there was a secret agreement between the beast and its owner that a donkey-ride was as absolute a measure as the standard yard or the Imperial pint. We came to a mystic barrier, an uncrossable but invisible obstacle beyond which my donkey simply would not go. I gave in at last and rode the animal back to its starting point, fourpence poorer but the richer in experience of life. It was a shock to me and I have never forgotten it.

Sand is a good thing, a very good thing, but like all good things it is possible to have too much of it. Seaside resorts there are – although wild horses would not drag their names from me – where there is so much sand that there can not honestly be said to be any sea. There is a long pier, to which the anxious Corporation adds a yard or two every year. Along this pier run trams, and a twopenny fare (very cheap considering the distance) will carry you almost to the end of it. Then, with a powerful telescope, on days when the clearness of the atmosphere portends the approach of rain,

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you may, if your eyesight be unimpaired, see on the fair horizon a faint smear which the wilfully optimistic inhabitants will tell you is the sea. The sea is no mirage at Blackpool but a living, roaring reality, a tamed but still formidable lion which every day rattles the bars of its cage, shaking its mane and frightening those who do not know that it is harmless.

In my day you could buy pictures of the sea breaking over the front, postcards with frosted snow dusted onto the tops of the waves and a moonlight transparency only visible when you held the card up to the light. I suppose all such things have vanished now, but not, I hope, entirely vanished, for a time will come when these early twentieth-century trifles will be collected and classified and treasured in museums as we now cherish a rococo fan or a George II snuff-box. Sometimes the pictures were painted on glass with frames of sea shells, with perhaps a silver anchor at the top signifying either Hope or Blackpool's maritime situation. I think the latter, for the theme of all these pictures was the Sea. When you got them home you could sometimes, when no one was looking, prise off one of the shells or two and, holding it to your ear, hear a faint echo of the thundering surge.

II

The Blackpool of ninety odd years ago, according to *An Illustrated Itinerary of the County of Lancashire* (1842), was a little town, hardly more than a village,

consisting of a single street at right angles to the sea, and having for a promenade a 'bank or elevation' of dark peaty earth, and for visitors a few thinly scattered and scantily occupied silent sitters. What would the author have said of the modern Blackpool with its swarming thousands, its terraced promenades like the hanging gardens of Babylon? What of the scantily occupied and silent sitters? True, there were libraries and newsrooms and 'various time-killing appendages', but the writer almost ostentatiously omits to say what they were. Time was a tough creature in 1842 and took a lot of killing. Nowadays he is dispatched with the efficiency of a Chicago sausage-machine, chopped into convenient lengths, gone before he knows he had started.

What a lot of boredom there must have been in the world of our great-grandmothers! How else explain the knitting and the tatting and the crochet-work, the cut-paper patterns, the lace making, the amateur painting in water-colours, not to mention the venerable pastime of twiddling the thumbs? Make no mistake about it, our ancestors were bored even at the seaside – most of all at the seaside. Perhaps they took boredom for granted just as they took heavy fathers and oil lamps, and a high rate of infant mortality. But we are, somehow, less patient, and seaside resorts must provide us with something better to do than gazing at the sea 'out of pure vacancy of thought'. A wet day at the seaside used, once upon a time, to plumb the depths of what Dr. Johnson would have called 'human infelicity'.

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Blackpool was among the pioneers of seaside entertainment even before the days when the cinema made all these things easy. In the old days, the bored visitor did not say 'Let us go to the pictures'; but 'Let us go to the Tower' And this wonderful Tower is still a prominent landmark.

There was one small boy, in the early years of the century and the sailor-suit appropriate to the epoch, who, travelling north to Blackpool, used to be promised a penny if he caught sight of the Tower before any other member of the party For him Blackpool was the Tower and the Tower was Blackpool, although, married to the Tower by ties which he then thought indissoluble, was that other huge erection in the early-meccano style of architecture, known as the Big Wheel. So closely were these united in his mind that when a well-meaning aunt offered to buy him in Blackpool's principal toy-shop a model of the Tower or a model of the Big Wheel, he was borne howling away, protesting that if he couldn't have both, he wouldn't have either.

Municipal authorities, even the Blackpool ones who pass for the world's most enlightened, do not seem to realize these mystic connections; and, some years ago, they demolished the Big Wheel. It is my only grievance against them, for the Big Wheel, in the days when aeroplanes were little more considered than box-kites, was a thrill of the very first magnitude. It had been erected in imitation of *La Grande Roue* at the Paris Exhibition of 1900 and was

exactly similar in structure and appearance. One entered a compartment rather like a diminutive tramcar, and this was slowly hoisted into the air as the wheel revolved. To modern youth, jaded with excitement, it might not have meant very much, but for me it was a flight into another world, the world of Jules Verne, which still seemed, to us Edwardians, fantastically removed from the world of everyday possibilities. I found it thrilling, even too thrilling: my father choosing rather strangely the moment when the car in which we were had reached the top of the curve to tell me the story of the Big Wheel That Stuck. I don't know where that Big Wheel was or even whether it ever existed. I who had up to that moment been filled with a confidence in Progress and Mechanical Invention worthy of the optimistic nineteenth century, began to feel the first glimmering of that doubt of Science which has now become a commonplace among the philosophers. I saw myself marooned for days, perhaps for weeks, at the top of a precarious disk of open-work lattice, far from friends and sand-castles and the 'sally-lunns' one bought for tea in the little shop near the railway bridge; and it was with a sigh of real thankfulness that I emerged from my imagined peril and trod the firm earth once more with exultant sand-shoes.

Yet I bore the Big Wheel no grudge. Somehow it was an essential part of Blackpool, a necessary incident in that exciting skyline seen from the shore at low tide, and made familiar on a thousand chromo-lithographed

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postcards and a hundred railway hoardings. If, as Plato dreamed, the ideal Form of everything is eternally laid up in heaven, celestial visitors to the paradisaal Blackpool will find the Big Wheel as solidly established as ever. But on earth it is not so, and the very Symbol of Change has suffered the reversal of fortune which itself pre-figured.

The Tower remains, noblest of all human erections, if it is noble to aspire without any motive but aspiration. True, there are other towers a rival at New Brighton, and something more than a rival in Paris. But in neither, so far as I am aware, can you buy toffee in the topmost story, and from neither can you see the Isle of Man. A sheer 520 feet it rises and the flatness of the surrounding country makes it seem even higher than it is. As one ascends in the lift, haunted by the horrible thought that, after all, nothing but a thin plank separates one from the gulf below, the network of interlocking steel girders gets thinner and thinner, until, when it seems about to dwindle into nothing, it suddenly blossoms into a head, like a tulip on the end of a stalk, and one emerges from the lift to airy platforms. The adventurous can still climb several stages higher by means of iron stairs and ladders, but the majority prefer to rest at the level to which the lift has taken them. Below lie the roofs, the three piers and the lace edge of the sea, bordered with black specks, alone, in bunches, clusters and solid masses. Even so must the world of action and pleasure look to the gods. That solitary

speck surrounded by a dense mass is plucking a quite inaudible banjo; those two dots linked together are in love. Far away, on an immensely enlarged horizon, are great ships, themselves no more than specks on the ocean. If I were a philosopher I should take up my permanent quarters in the Tower of Blackpool: a less ferocious Stylite perched for ever on a pillar overlooking the world.

If I grew tired of dwelling on the topmost balconies, or found that the morning bacon was cold before it reached me, I should descend into the building from which the Tower springs, and going down into the very cellars should find there that other favourite resort of philosophers – a cave, a grotto.

The fascination of a grotto must have come down to us from our troglodyte ancestors. They were compelled to hide in caves from cold and wild beasts and may well have hated their uncomfortable refuges. But gradually they made the caves more habitable and decorated their walls with the images of deer and bison. They may even have developed a sentimental regret for 'the old cave', have become cave-proud, talked of the honour of the cave, and bade their erring daughters 'never darken its mouth again'. These are idle speculations, for the gulf of many thousand years divides us from the cave, but, none the less, just as all boys want to climb trees, so all those who have not grown old before their time are fascinated by a cave.

Less remote associations creep in to help the enchantment, for did not

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wizards live in caves until the Middle Ages, and smugglers until quite recent times? Ali Baba found a cave full of jewels, and brocades, and gold pieces, and all a bandit's treasure, and he must be a very unimaginative child who cannot find enough in the grotto at Blackpool to set his fancy working until next year's holiday at least. For there is an aquarium, cunningly contrived in the niches of artificial rocks, fish gleaming in green translucent water, toads immovable except for the pulsing of their throats, crabs that move so slowly that no one has the patience to wait for them. Then, set in the angles between the tanks and the protruding rocks, are fantastic machines, mechanical theatres, showing the Execution of Crippen, or the Haunted House, footballers, cricketers, fortune-tellers, hens that lay tin eggs full of caramels, electrical batteries for rejuvenating the aged, games of skill to make the young grow old before their time, shooting ranges, push-pin and Corinthian bagatelle, and, over them all, an air of dream, a sensation of being transported to another planet, or actually beneath the sea, where the only light is filtered through green water, and the rocky architecture has no straight lines at all.

But let us not stay too long in the grotto, for that is not the only enchantment that lies at the foot of the Tower. The base of that colossal structure does not, as at Paris, span the roadway with a huge semicircular arch, but rests upon a kind of palace, piled story upon story and containing within its walls restaurants and cafés, roof-gardens, shops, an

immense ballroom and the finest circus in the world. This is no sawdust ring hastily improvised in a tent on a piece of waste land (although that, too, has its peculiar fascination to the amateur of circuses), but a permanent structure capable of being transformed at will into a cage for lions or a tank for seals.

I remember a marvellous aquatic act, partly performed by seals and partly by a most graceful troupe of 'bathing beauties', beautiful in repose but even more beautiful in action. Even the seals could scarcely outdo them in grace and agility, as they dived and plunged and twisted. In fact, one scarcely knew which was which among the shining black bodies until a smiling face emerged suddenly from the water shaking the drops from her eyes. And there were trick riders better than any I have ever seen, except at Olympia, and strong men and people who juggled with a miraculous number of Indian clubs. He is a poor creature who does not enjoy a circus, but most cities are content with one, and that only occasionally. Blackpool has two, *en permanence*. The smaller is not so elaborate as the one at the Tower, but the clowns I thought even funnier.

There is no lack of other entertainment; Blackpool seems to have more theatres than any other place in England, with the exception of London. Theatrical managers discovered long ago the advantages of trying-out plays in the provinces prior to their London production. The problem was to find some place where there was a genuine enthusiasm for the theatre combined

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with a sound critical sense, and it is significant that both the favourite spots where these conditions are most completely realized are in Lancashire: one in Manchester and the other in Blackpool. The Blackpool audience, in summer at any rate, provides a very useful cross-section of the British public. It is ready to be amused, but not willing to be amused by anything, and a play which has been successful at the seaside resort has at least a good chance of proving acceptable in London. The results are happy enough. The managers are provided with a useful dress rehearsal and a breathing space in which necessary adjustments can be made, and Blackpool has the benefit of a series of productions which are very nearly up to the highest standards of the Metropolis. The actors love it. Manchester, for all its virtues, is not exactly the place one would choose for a holiday, but Blackpool has most of the advantages of Manchester and many of its own besides. How pleasant in the intervals of rehearsal to step out of the theatre almost on to the beach, to swim and ride and visit the amusement park! If the piece is a musical one, the chorus girls and show girls have the time of their lives, and even the principals are able to unbend. The tragedy queen is seen trying her skill at the coco-nut shy, the young leading lady has her fortune told in the booth of the palmist, the *jeune premier* spends his time in the shooting gallery or on the scenic railway, and the whole company returns to London not only rehearsed but refreshed.

Then there are the piers. Blackpool has no fewer than three which share between them five splendid pavilions for dramatic entertainments. I wonder who the first genius was who discovered that a jetty pushed out over the water to enable ships to embark their passengers from a shore too shallow to allow them to come near, was a thing pleasant in itself. It was pleasant to walk on long planks with a gleam of green sea between, pleasant to be on a promontory, an artificial peninsula which enabled one to look back on the land as from a boat, without the trouble or discomfort of sailing. It was pleasant to fish with a line and sinker, pleasant to watch one's friends on the promenade through a long telescope; but the pleasures of piers were only just beginning. They were in the end no longer mere elongated platforms, but, expanding at the tip and crowning themselves with pavilions, grew cafés and theatres, and dance halls, a microcosm of the larger world of amusement on shore. Some day when our composers have awakened to the implications of modernity and have forgotten the delusion that there is nothing modern but machinery, they will begin to compose special music for piers; pier-music like the water-music made for the eighteenth-century lake and river festivals.

As a child I was fascinated less by the pier itself than by the substructure, that forest of iron pillars, like trees with interlocking branches, a mechanistic, cubic forest, the more mysterious for the fact that it was often submerged. If I were an artist I should paint that

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forest with its curiously regular stems each rising from a little pool and each encrusted, to varying heights, with barnacles, seaweed, mussels and enterprising shellfish of all kinds, intermingled with patches of red lead protecting the ironwork and looking like some particularly vivid variety of submarine fungus; while far above is the darkness of the topmost branches, flat and horizontal, pierced by long slits of light, and the noise of the feet of the tree dwellers continually tramping to and fro. I should even like to immure myself in a diving bell and wait for the rising of the tide, and see the limp seaweed on the iron trees spread out faces and fingers, the mussels open their shells with the rhythmic motion of breathing and the little fish dodge and twist and glimmer through the subaqueous shadows, while, very faint and far away, music from another world filtered down to me, the shape of the melody distorted like the figures that the sunlight throws on the bed of a shallow sea.

III

Behind the South Pier there is a large area of dry sand, where a Pleasure Beach has been established. A Pleasure Beach is a wonderful institution, full of every kind of harmless amusement that the brain of man can devise. Those who doubt whether we have, after all, progressed in virtue would do well to visit it and then to transport themselves in imagination to ancient Rome in order to see how modern man has

sterilized his vices and purified his passions. The passion of gambling is probably eternal as well as universal, but here it has been made completely harmless. It is difficult to be ruined by any of these devices, these galloping *petits chevaux*, these push-pin and shove-ha'penny boards. The pitting of man against man, and man against animal, which once filled the Roman amphitheatre with blood, has now dwindled to a boxing-booth and a lion-tamer. Curiosity, the vice which drove our forebears out of Eden, is now satisfied by a tattooed lady or a mummified cat.

How simple are human pleasures after all! To hurtle down a slippery slope on a doormat, to rise in the air on a flying machine firmly tethered to its central pin, to ride a horse, or a bird, or a dragon, round and round for ever to the sound of music which fatigues no musician for it is all produced by a steam-engine, to throw balls at coconuts, or rubber rings at brightly coloured vases, to angle for goldfish, to turn the handles of peepshows – all 'Passed by the New York Board of Censors' – to eat ice-cream and toffee-apples – does not this list contain within itself, as it were in miniature, the sum total of possible human pleasures? The Pleasure Beach is Monte Carlo without its greed, the Alps without the fatigue of going there, the joys of *gourmandise* without their expense, the Cresta Run without its danger. It is the final solution of the periodical need for an orgy, a safety-valve for the high spirits of mankind, set in a scene of extraordinary beauty, made doubly beauti-

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ful when night falls and the flares are lighted, and little rows of fairy lights hang on strings from booth to booth, and all along the perilous convolutions of the aerial railway.

Blackpool specializes in Illuminations. When autumn comes and the sky is dark sufficiently early, the whole length of the promenade is hung with coloured lights, which gather in clusters at the entrance to the piers and climb dizzily up the height of the Tower. Men, like moths, have always loved shining lights and felt their hypnotic attraction, but it is only since the coming of electricity that their full magic can be appreciated. The illuminations of Italian cities during the days of the Renaissance, those bowls of oil, each with a floating wick, which the Florentines used to arrange along the battlements of the Palazzo Vecchio, even the Papal illuminations of Rome during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, must have been poor things beside these myriads of twinkling, coloured globes, binding a whole city in a shining mask. Magic is no less magic because it can be turned on like a tap.

Such are some of the pleasures of Blackpool, but in the summer, and at the seaside, no indoor entertainment, however elaborate, can vie with a troupe of pierrots on the sands. We touch hands here with the remotest traditions of the theatre, with the three planks and a lean-to which witnessed the birth of Attic drama, with the Attiline farces, with the fools of the miracle plays of the Middle Ages, and

with the astonishing effervescence of the *Commedia dell' Arte*. Pierrot himself was a single character in that Italian Comedy, that vivid distorting mirror of life throughout three centuries, and when the mirror was broken he found his white moon face reflected in all the fragments. What had been a single personage became a troupe, and with Punch dwindled to a puppet, and Harlequin and Pantaloon relegated to the Christmas pantomime, he alone, so strangely multiplied, is left to carry on the great tradition.

How well he carries it on all adolescents know. For them he is not only a funny man, not even primarily a funny man, but a creature of romantic fancy, singing, with a melancholy that is only half assumed, of all that life has to offer and all that it so often denies. Sometimes even in the most sophisticated of us, a snatch of melody, some half-remembered words, strike an interior chord with a sweet yet almost unbearable poignancy. The words may be foolish, the tune, as music, contemptible, but human experiences are often compounded of elements which in themselves are nothing. Shall I be thought incurably sentimental if I confess that to hear again a few bars of the old song:

‘You made me love you –
I didn’t want to do it’

waken the most extraordinary echoes in a heart long since emptied of nonsense? It brings back a warm salty wind, the smell of gasolene flares and old canvas, moonlight and a soft hand – in fact the

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whole conventional bag of tricks, which somehow, for an instant, are not tricks, but real magic. Ridiculous, of course, but so perhaps is all human longing; useless, no doubt, but so is all regret. Even in the big theatres, it is astonishing how much of the talent is native.

In the smaller one and the pier tents and the improvised platforms it is entirely so. Lancashire – alas! – does not export as much manufactured cotton as it did, but its export of comedians and dancing girls is still unrivalled throughout the civilized world. The comedians appear all over England and the dancing girls all over Europe, and you can hear, as I have heard, the purest Lancashire spoken on the stage of the summer-theatre at Rimini and in the *coulisses* of the Casino de Paris. ‘Les Girls’ are known in Berlin and Munich, in Madrid and Bucharest; nearly all of them come from Lancashire and all of them know Blackpool, and would willingly exchange the seductions of foreign cities for the homely gaiety of its shore and promenade.

Lancashire comedians form a class by themselves. They seem to spring up so naturally, to owe almost nothing to stage traditions of humour, but to be simply a concentration, a distillation of the life of the people. To listen to the conversation of a Lancashire crowd, especially a Lancashire crowd on holiday at Blackpool, is to fancy that every other man and every fourth woman is a born comedian, part of the great tradition of living humour which has given us a George Formby and a Gracie Fields. In one sense it is not so much

humour as good-humour, an extraordinary zest for life combined with a clear-eyed perception of the hollowness of shams. Pretentiousness of any kind fares badly in Lancashire; superior persons are not much appreciated, raised eyebrows are soon put out of countenance.

Humour is like a fir-tree; it flourishes best in what the ignorant might think barren soil. It dies when life is one round of careful comfort, the flat plains are uncongenial to its spirit. The peasant has his slow smile and the sophisticated ‘clubman’ his quick wit, but humour, that gift of the gods to enable us to find life tolerable even when it is most difficult, springs from the crowded cities. So much so that the only humour which can vie with the humour of Lancashire is that of the Cockney. He too is crowded and uncomfortable in a city too largely made by the Industrial epoch and a policy of *laissez-faire*. He too is huddled into inadequate dwellings; he too has discovered the eternal joke about the lodger. For him also families are too congested to live altogether at peace, and the mother-in-law is a pressing reality who would often be a tragedy if she were not turned into a jest.

The main difference between Cockney and Lancashire humour is that the latter has a stolidity which is itself part of the joke. In the classic story of Albert and the Lion, one of those masterpieces of folklore that finally find their poet and pass into literature, but wander from mouth to mouth for years before they do so, gaining a little touch here

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and a sharpening of phrase there, the richest part of the fun is the calm way in which the bereaved parents take the devouring of their offspring.

"Ere, Bert. Yon lion's etten oop our Albert."

"Oh, 'as 'e? I'll go tell t'man."

I think I prefer the prose version with all its crudity, although the verse account has its own felicities:

'She said, somebody ought to be sum-
monsed,
So that was decided upon.'

I think that when the Last Trump sounds there may be a panic everywhere else, but not in Lancashire. The first reaction will be one of unbreakable stolidity, broken after a moment by some remark about the angels which will shake heaven and earth with a great gust of laughter, if heaven appreciates honest humour, as I hope it does.

Superior persons smile at the Lancashire accent, preferring the squeezed vowels and clipped consonants of Southern speech. After all, it is the merest literary accident that Chaucer chose to write in Middle English and so made what had been merely one of the dialects into the accepted English tongue. Local dialects suffered a long eclipse and some of them disappeared, cowed first by the spread of elementary education and finished off by the cultivated tones of the B.B.C. announcer. But the Lancashire language will take some killing. It shows no signs of diminished vitality yet, and in Blackpool it can be heard in all its purity. The broad 'a', the long 'o', the almost

elided article are its most striking characteristics, but it has kept the seventeenth-century second person singular – one of the major losses of 'Standard' English. 'Thee' and 'thou' are natural between parents and children, between brothers and familiar friends; they express a paternal relationship between master and man, they give a new intimacy to lovers. Every language has them but English, and we had them once. France has the verb *tutoyer* Germany its *du* and *dich*, and Shakespeare could still make Toby Belch admonish Sir Andrew:

'If thou thoust him thrice, it shall not
be amiss.'

But cultivated speech has lost 'thou', and the formal 'you' must suffice both for a first meeting and for the silver wedding-day. Lancashire has been more faithful, and the honourable custom there preserved and combined with a plentiful sprinkling of 'lad' and 'lass' (splendid Anglo-Saxon monosyllables) give to the speech of the North a directness and a homely sincerity which only the snob and the pedant will despise.

Blackpool caters for all who like to come, but (why not confess it at once?) there are two kinds of man who will never be happy there. One is the natural solitary, the man who cannot be happy unless his fellows are miles away, who seeks out the most inaccessible mountains and most distant countries. For him the sight of the beach crowded with holiday-makers, the busy streets, the full cinemas, the constant movement of the Amusement Park,

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must be purely distasteful. Let him keep away from Blackpool at any rate.

There is another kind of man, who does not desire absolute solitude, but who can only enjoy himself when surrounded by persons of precisely his own habits and social background. For him the luxury of exclusiveness outweighs all others, so that he will put up with any discomfort if he can only be sure of meeting nobody that he might not have met in Mayfair drawing-rooms or Bloomsbury studios. He is usually a sophisticated person whose sophistication has stopped halfway, the unoriginal who can only accept as amusing that which is also, for the moment, the fashion

He is an unhappy creature at best, for exclusiveness is a mirage, a pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow, something always pursued but never overtaken. Wherever he goes the pleasure he undoubtedly gets from snobbery exposes him to continual discomfort. From the ivory tower of his own fastidiousness he looks out upon the world but does not pronounce it good. The rich flavour of ordinary life turns his stomach. He takes no pleasure in human characteristics, overhears no snatches of real, unself-conscious dialogue, dwindles and shrivels year by year from lack of contact with the earth, and when life offers him a beefsteak prefers to toy with a bottled olive and a tinned sardine. Such a man also had better keep away from Blackpool.

People who dine at eight and sup at midnight know nothing of that institution which binds the Empire to-

gether more surely than political institutions or loyalty to a reigning house. In Brisbane and Jo'berg, in Ottawa and Wellington, it is as familiar as in Blackpool and Oldham – the ancient, honourable and admirable institution of High Tea. Here in Blackpool it flourishes as nowhere else, for all the necessary ingredients are to hand, in quantity and quality unsurpassed. Where in the world are there such shrimps, caught the same day, shelled and potted and carried home from a shop on the very foreshore? The had-dock comes from Scotland which is not very far away, and then there is always excellent ham and eggs and those curious hot-cross buns without the cross which are a speciality of the district. And, of course, tea, carefully blended to suit the Lancashire water and only surpassed by the tea one drinks in Ireland, where the humblest cabin-dweller would never dream of paying less than four shillings a pound.

Some Blackpool visitors put rum in it, which seems a work of supererogation but is very palatable. I am forgetting winkles, brought home in a paper bag and eaten with a long pin, but they are common to every seaside resort in the kingdom. Oysters are also eaten, but not at tea-time. The Lancashire man, scorning the proverb about the months with an 'r' in them, goes out on to the promenade before breakfast and swallows a couple of dozen, with the salt morning wind in his nostrils, standing at improvised stalls along the sea-front. This is a personal preference, but High Tea is a

Blackpool Panegyric

sacred rite, practised by all who really appreciate Blackpool.

There is another Blackpool institution which the foreigner is sure to notice. As he walks back to his hotel or lodging about ten o'clock in the evening, the front room of every other house is lit up, the window is open and a sing-song is in progress. In no city can there be so much singing as in Blackpool on a summer evening. Even the wireless, that great discourager of amateur talent, has failed to put an end to it, for the pleasure of those who take part is as much in singing as in listening. They sing all kinds of songs, from the newest theme-song of current films to old favourites such as *Annie Laurie* and *When you go down the vale*. They even sing hymns, and as if they enjoyed them, which is more than can be said of many a church congregation; and they sing

well, which is more than can be said of many a church choir. They sing because they are happy and because singing loosens something else besides the muscles of the larynx; it loosens the joints in the barriers between man and man and establishes a relationship between them which can only be called a communion. In this communion the frigidly fastidious, those who are immured in the padded cells of their own frightened sensibility, can, in the nature of things, have no part; but he would be a strange hater of his kind who could walk through the darkening streets, borne like a cork from one wave of sound to the next, until he is cast up upon the shore of his own doorstep, without feeling a curious exhilaration, an expansion of his sympathies and a wish, however remote from action, to join in.

Visiting the Caves

by William Plomer

SUDDENLY I discover in a wooded place
That the trees are rooted in the hollow of your hand,
And when with finger-tips your veins I trace
See branching runnels in the firm sea-sand.

The lift, the gangway and the staircase lead to you,
And you, my bed and pillow, give me rest;
I visit the caves and am guided, and I know
Those galleries are glittering within your breast;
Whatever you receive I share
And I carry you like a passport everywhere.

Words are born between my fingers, you their source,
And the pen I hold is as delicate as a bone,
With you for compass I can steer a course
And with you for company can bear to be alone:
Bringing goodness out of complicated evil
The world (for me) you have raised to your level.

Your moorland strength sustains me in the street,
And the thought of you touches me as a plectrum strings –
Child, parent, mate, heart with a steady beat,
Yours is the warmth in which the future sings.

The Friendly Creature

by Rhys Davies

I

GOODACRE met her through his liking for sunflowers.

Those tall arresting flowers, so glowing that they seem to create the resonant noise of bells in the soft air of early autumn, that lift their faces so savagely for a day or two, then droop with such a world-weary gesture, they had always been to him Cleopatras among the mob of the garden. Several times he had stood outside the low hedge dreamily and studiously gazing at them: they were ranked against the side-wall of the cottage, their heads almost touching the eaves of grey thatch. Then one day a woman's head popped up suddenly over the hedge and with a rapid smile, said:

'Good afternoon. You like the sunflowers, do you?'

A desire for sociability was in her face. But it was several minutes before Goodacre was convinced that she was not a pythoness. His nostrils had quaked at her sudden appearance over the hedge. Yet, such was her magnetism, he found himself modestly replying to her quick conversational flourishes and springing smiles. They stood talking of the health and habits

of flowers in the district. Goodacre observed the thick fleshy strength of her claret and purple dahlias, the marble hardness of her chrysanthemums, the vehement glare of her asters. The sunlight struck sparks of coloured light out of the flowers. 'A blaze of colour,' slipped unchecked out of his lips, enviously. For up in the garden of the cottage where he lived, half a mile away and forsaken for a year, there were only choked snubbed plants lying sick and unnursed in their untidy beds. He liked flowers, in a far-away fashion.

'Come to stay here for long?' she asked in a voice that darted like the flight of a swift. He explained that he had borrowed the cottage from a friend, to write in it something that had to be done in quietude.

'You'll have that all right,' she said. 'Up there, in the wood. B'rr: quiet enough here, but there -' At this point he perceived that she was wearing a bathing-costume of garish colour and debased cubist design. He expressed his admiration of the un-interfered-with Tudor cottage. Quickly she invited him to an interior inspec-

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tion. Wondering if he were doing a prudent thing, he accepted.

At the door she received him in the bathing-costume, but instantly fled, begging to be excused. She scuttled upstairs and then appeared tying tightly round her waist a florid dressing-gown, voluminous, in which the agile shapeliness of her body was stupidly lost. She peered at him with almost delicate roguishness. Goodacre was able to perceive that she had expected him to be embarrassed. She was about forty in feature and line, but out of her gushed a much younger spirit. 'While,' she said, 'you're seeing the cottage, the kettle can be boiling.' And she ran away again, into the kitchen. A friendly creature.

The rooms were dark and low under the swarthy beams. Outside, in the sunshine, the cottage browsed like a pretty spaniel. Inside, it was the dwelling of old women whose lot is done and who sit talking of funerals and dead days beyond recall. She displayed to him the crooked rheumatical rooms, the old oak-veined walls leaning towards each other as if tottering. The furnishings were scrupulous, the negroid oak bedsteads and dressing-chests genuine. She explained that she was the housekeeper, Skelt by name, widowed: the owner of the cottage, who visited it seldom, a 'bachelor lady' and an agent for a French firm of corset manufacturers. 'Not that I wear them,' she included, vigorously. 'Not hers nor anyone else's.' Dimly he perceived additionally that she was a woman who desired

to stand apart somewhat from her sisters. Lingered in one of the bedrooms, she sat on a bed and talked of her young daughter who lived with her and cycled every day to her job in a draper's in the small town ten miles away.

'And now the kettle's boiling over!' she screamed and plunged down the dangerous staircase like a trout over a fall. Goodacre followed with his usual meditative dawdling. Studious to a degree that did not leave him much time for contacts with the world around him, he felt, aloofly, an attractive warmth emanating from this friendly woman. The countryside was lonely and spare of the sound of sociable voices as a Quaker meeting. Not that he minded very much, translating the letters of Heloise and writing a psychological study of her lover: and the sun was amorous of the soft south curves of the district oftener than of other places he knew, the air continually like a handful of loosestrife, meadowrue and ragged-robin held under the nostrils. This nice Mrs. Skelt was as pleasing as the district. He discovered that she did not offend him.

Apple-jelly, strawberry-jam, tarts the size of pennies, a bronze-gold fruit cake bursting of its own richness, triangles of bread and butter of leaf thinness, two crimson roses in a miniature vase marked *A Present from Southsea* – these she produced on a low table covered with a lavender-tinted lace cloth. After the scowling fare of the wood-cutter's wife who attended him

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this was a smiling tea. But Mrs. Skelt seemed unable to keep still. A tart was bounced into her mouth and she appeared to swallow it whole; she jumped up and fetched a popular novel – they had been talking of literature as entertainment in the evening – pressed the book on his high knees. ‘Take that back with you,’ she said; ‘I couldn’t put it down till I had finished it.’ He accepted the loan meekly.

‘But what I find bad here,’ she said with a shrill, anguish-touched bark, ‘is no men.’

‘No men?’ he questioned vaguely, his mouth full of apple-jelly.

‘Well,’ she said with unashamed snobbery, ‘there’s *louts*, of course. You been to the pub here? Gosh, the men there! Daft and dirty and drunk. If I was their wives I’d beat them, I’d . . . I’d chuck a pail of water over them in bed. What good has schooling and reading and writing been to them? – they’ve forgot it all and still live like they did when this house was built.’ She looked vixenish. ‘There’s a young chap from Brooke’s farm after my daughter Peggie now, catches her on her bike on her way home, and he doesn’t know who’s Prime Minister and whether folk in Russia are black or white – “yeller” he said, grinning at me, when I asked him. *That’s* the sort of company hereabouts.’ She flounced and pouted, in the florid dressing-gown.

Then she asked him suddenly:

‘What do you write?’

In the confusion of being so

briskly invited out of his interior fastnesses, he answered, ‘I write middles.’

‘Middles,’ she repeated.

Hastily he explained, naming the austere literary papers to which he contributed

‘You must be very clever,’ she pondered.

‘No, no,’ he said, remembering how often his middles turned on him in print and gave him nausea.

She pushed a vigorous curl of her black hair, loosened in her darting to and fro, back into the smart arrangement of her coiffure, ‘Well, she persisted, ‘it’s been a pleasure to have tea with a clever man, at last. I hope you’ll come again.’ At which she stared at him with such intensity that he became acutely aware of his own face, even remembering what Jimmy Norgate used to say in school, ‘An owl, that’s what you look like, Goodacre, an owl.’ He blinked behind his black-rimmed spectacles, silently begging her to remove her gaze.

‘I know what you must take with you,’ she was saying, ‘to keep you company up there. A sunflower.’

Heedless of his protests she hurried out to the garden and hacked away one of the massive blooms. He held the glowing and savage flower awkwardly. She took him to the gate in the drowsy lane.

‘Be sure to come soon again,’ she waved a hand to him. ‘Tea at four always.’

Tall and lanky, carrying book and flower, he walked under the beeches that fringed the great wood. Yes, a

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nice friendly creature: and a charming tea. The sunflower, too, how pleasant of her! Sunflowers made him feel warm: they had a kind of fire, mysterious, the final proud effort of the dying summer, the last fires of the earth thrown up in grand convulsion . . . He would write a little descriptive middle on the subject to-morrow: put Heloise and Abelard aside for a day.

II

Discussing the week-end meals with the wood-cutter's wife, he had cause to mention the name of Mrs. Skelt who had told him that if he required a fowl she would kill one of her excellent Wyandottes.

'I don't 'ave truck with that 'ooman,' the spare and now visibly stiffened Mrs. Malley announced. She peered at him severely. 'And by your leave, sir, I'd wish not to cook neither 'en nor cock out of 'er yard.'

Goodacre asked the reason. But Mrs. Malley pretended not to hear him and her face would disclose nothing beyond a puritanic pinching of her sere lips. A few days afterwards he met her husband resting in a glade at sunset, and after an exchange of weather-talk, the wood-cutter observed, fixing his eye on the corpse of a mole lying at his feet:

'My missus says you like fowls and 'ad a mind to buy some off the widdler down Birch Cottage.'

Goodacre, with cautious indifference, agreed.

' 'Tween us men,' the wood-cutter went on after a meditative sucking of his pipe, 'things can be told' He suddenly looked up and gave a surprising wink. 'The 'oomen,' he said, slowly as a trickling brook that may at any moment dry up, 'they don't like 'er, that sits about in garden in striped bathing-costume for all to see over hedge, and airs and graces fit for the Queen of China. And 'er goes in men's bar of pub with young daughter and calls for glass of port like a chap.' He stared reflectively at the mole, whose paws were still helplessly clutched up in its death agony. 'That there old mole,' he remarked, 'he pushes up a big tump of earth as if he wanted a pallis to live in, and look at his little legs and bit of a snout! They got cheek, 'ave moles.' But he would say no more of Mrs. Skelt, suddenly deciding, presumably, to withhold her darkest deeds

A fortnight passed before Goodacre felt the need of again warming himself at Mrs. Skelt's vivacity: Heloise had been particularly absorbing, and another box of books had arrived from London. But one afternoon he strolled down through the bronze-glistening wood to her cottage: after lunch he had suddenly noticed that for more than a week he had not spoken to any human being except the domestic-shrivelled Mrs. Malley.

That day she was wearing a puce frock, the skirt oddly curled up at the end like a canterbury-bell. Her demeanour, however, had lost its brisk gaiety, and she sat still. Only her dark

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eyes shone brighter than ever, but with a dilated shining, as if they watched for some menace. Presently she said, broodingly:

'I've just been counting the chairs in this house' She looked round with mingled hostility and pity at those in the room. 'There's thirty-five. Thirty-five! And what use are they? Month after month go past and no one sits in them, never, never, never. It's enough to drive a woman off her head.'

'You ought,' suggested Goodacre, 'to take a job in London.'

'What!' she cried, 'live in a dungeon of a basement and be everlastingly at the beck and call of a town-woman! I've heard of those London jobs. Slavery. Here I'm my own mistress three parts of the year.'

For she lived in the ornamental house as if it was her own; and her employer had spent money and taste in making it suggestive of luxury. She could play the lady of leisure and substance here, vicariously enjoying its sweets.

'Autumn and winter my mistress never comes near me,' she said. 'The house might be mine for all she cares. A queer woman; she's taken to travelling often to Manchester these days'

In spite of his efforts to introduce a cheerful if literary note into the air, the afternoon dripped of dismal forebodings. Once she leaned to him and breathed like a wraith:

'Do you know what I sit here waiting for, in this house?'

He shook his head. She continued, 'I sit waiting for death.' Hands clasped

limply, neck sloped, head wilting, she was Desdemona singing her willow-song. But Goodacre refrained from encouraging indulgence in this picturesque melancholy. With weighty satire he launched into a review of the popular novel she had lent him, poking intellectual fun at the simpering love-tale. She listened bright-eyed and nodding. After a while she brought another pretty and delicate tea Lanky, bespectacled, round-shouldered, 'the eternal student,' he roamed round the room while she poured out. He bent to examine an engraving low on the wall.

'Do you know,' she said, with the same foreboding manner, 'that the seam of your trousers is split?'

'Where?' he demanded idiotically.

'I'm considered,' she said, 'to be good with a needle. Any repairs you'd like done, I'd be pleased.'

'Thank you, thank you,' he said, hiding his blushes in the steam of his tea-cup.

But she went on with a kind of doleful tranquillity, 'You're a young man that wants someone to look after you properly. Books, books, they're all right, but you mustn't eat and drink and wear them.'

He was glad when tea was over and she suggested a walk in the garden: he was beginning to find the ancient Tudor interior oppressive. Young man! He was forty-two, he remembered.

The chrysanthemums were springing their full glory, bushes of white and tawny and pale and dark brown, the colours of lions and angels, ale and

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African flesh. But the sunflowers hung down their dazed heads, staring raggedly at the earth. Mrs. Skelt fetched a scissors and cut a great armful of the chrysanthemums for him. 'Though they always make *me* see wreaths,' she said.

And he was not successful in making her forget the dirge she continued to sing to herself. He left her pensively leaning over the wicket-gate, purple-gowned, pale-faced, dark-eyed. But she made him promise to come again, soon

III

Goodacre saw Mrs. Skelt several times after that. Usually she was gay and talked of film-stars and Paris, which she was going to visit some day, when she found a husband kind enough to take her, and vices she thought modern, and the behaviour of flowers and beasts. But sometimes she adorned herself with mourning, wearing sadness as a helpless criticism of life, that had beaten her down, a hard-working widow whose talents were mocked at in a callous world. She showered plums and apples on him, from the russet-coloured little orchard beside the house, which was magically fertile as her flower-garden; she lent him many more romantic novels, in which the trials of plebeian love were stoutly rewarded at last: these he read as a flat relief from the perilous ecstasies of Abelard and Heloise.

'That widder,' said the wood-

cutter at length, 'down in Birch Cottage be looking for a husbant. Young or old it don't matter, long as it shows a pair of trousis in the 'ouse.'

It was the obvious court-of-law logic. But Goodacre snubbed the wood-cutter, clicking 'T't, t't, t't' with his tongue and walking away, thereby assuring Mr. Malley, out for discovery, that something was 'going-on'.

But Goodacre had snubbed him in scorn of gossip with peasants, not because he was aware that the wood-cutter's observations were meant to apply to himself. He continued to look on Mrs. Skelt from afar. When he forgot Heloise and Abelard and devoted a little thought to the widow, he saw her as a person who lived more or less contentedly in her own remote coign some distance away from the herd: like himself. He respected her way of living but agreed that it was good for such lonely birds to visit each other now and again. Not that he invited her to his cottage. Oh, no. The widow's lament over the empty chairs, her glasses of port in the village pub, her dressing up, the rouge she now affected – these he ignored.

'I've got two hundred pounds saved,' she told him, 'and if something doesn't happen soon, I'm going to squander them staying in a big hotel in Paris.'

Goodacre blinked. She asked him if he knew the names of such hotels in Paris. He had always stayed in a shabby one near the Bibliothèque Nationale. And he had visited the

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Louvre. That was all he could tell her. She nodded and said dartingly:

'Will you be going again? It would be nice if we were there together. Gay Paree, eh?'

'So they say,' he said austere. 'No, I have no cause to visit Paris again.'

The last red and yellow leaves fell, the sun began to threaten and scold the charming landscape, grass was the brown of pheasants, the playful kindergarten hills became very still. Mrs. Skelt continued to alternately frisk and lament. She slaughtered a great many of her fowls and looked at the fattening geese with a baleful Michaelmas eye. And Goodacre continued to lay before her what knowledge – literary – of the world he had, which she snatched at greedily, without analysis, swallowing large lumps of crude information.

Her daughter Peggie would give her no step-up into the better world; she would marry her farm-labourer, an admirable young man, curt-limbed and arrow-voiced, wasting neither word nor behaviour, sure of his goal. He treated his intended mother-in-law with an amused ease: she meant no more than the smoking of a cigarette. Sure enough he married Peggie before October was out: suddenly. Goodacre gave them a half-set of Dickens.

So that Mrs. Skelt's cries of loneliness became more anguished. And more avid. In apple-green and grey brocade, swirling down to her feet, high-waisted and ill-cut, her hair frizzed out in a different way, she moaned:

'I've only got my old gander Bo-bo

now. He follows me about everywhere. Small comfort, though, a goose.' And her black lively glance appealed to Goodacre for understanding of her plight

'Why not ask your mistress for permission to take a paying-guest?' he suggested benignly.

'Would you come?' she asked instantly

'Alas, no, it's not possible,' he coughed. 'I have to resume my studies in London before very long.'

'I do wish I could pluck up courage and go to Paris,' she cried. 'Spend my little fortune.' And in the ensuing silence, she sighed again, 'Paris! The gay city.'

And, the evenings drawing in, she kept the lamps untouched, so that often the crooked room was dark blue when he rose to return to Heloise and Mrs. Malley's cold meat and stolid jam tart. But he never left the cottage without feeling warmer for the little conference with Mrs. Skelt: he never failed to think of her as a nice friendly creature.

IV

Yet for some reason, which kept itself hidden, three weeks passed without his visiting the Tudor cottage. Indeed he had gone well into November before he noticed the chill ugly month. The translation was nearing its end: the living-room was littered with books, mostly second-hand and dusty, and his only pauses in reading and writing seemed to be to eat, fling

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logs on the fire, and go to bed. True, in the afternoons he took a walk down the road that wound from the house through the wood, but it was a dream-walk and the winds that gnawed at the bare branches also froze his feet without his knowing it. Vaguely he was aware of Mrs. Skelt's tea somewhere beyond. But he turned in the opposite direction, shaking his head, obscurely.

The black silence of the evenings found him crouched before the fire with a book, or drooped leanly over his manuscript. Sometimes he would look up and stare at the curtainless windows. What was it that sighed in the great empty wood? Numbers of damp chill ghosts wandering? He had such fancies. A vague awareness of stricken lives and thwarted desires (Oh, those cries of Abelard!) stirred him out of printed or written page and made his nerves uneasy. . . .

Then one night a loud knocking sounded at the front door: he jumped in the chair. Who could it be at this hour, ten o'clock! Holding lamp aloft he shuffled to the door. The shaft of golden light revealed Mrs Skelt's face, pale but blotched with rouge. Her eyes seemed purple with vehemence. Because she said nothing, he exclaimed in shock:

'Aha! Mrs. Skelt.'

And stood aside mechanically for her to enter.

'I saw the light in your window,' she breathed. 'I've come from the pub.' But the road down through the wood was surely not her proper way

home. She was wearing a citron-coloured cloak, but no hat. The wind had blown her black hair to gipsy wildness. At her entrance, even for Goodacre, the dark hall had become tense: alive, the walls listened. He steadied the lamp in his hand, aware of a stealthy sickness. The nerves of his stomach had never been of the best. In the living-room she suddenly ran towards the fire and cast herself down on the long raised brick hearth. 'I'm cold,' she cried. But he felt she lied. She looked hot: she even looked tipsy, he thought further, his stomach still gripped in dread and excitement. Then she began to look solemn. 'I've just smacked a man's face,' she said.

He sat down at the table and bleakly nodded.

'For insulting you and me,' she added. And without waiting for his inquiry she went on briskly, 'I heard them talking in the smoking-room, and they knew I was in the bar-parlour. They said -' and again she became very solemn, 'they called me your lay-by.'

'Lay-by?' he asked.

'Your sweetheart,' she explained - 'your sweetheart and more.'

'Oh come, come,' he stuttered, 'these . . . these are libellous statements.'

'I smacked Tom Smallbone's face and threatened the others with likewise,' she said, with an air of having settled the matter. 'I thought I'd better come and tell you what they're saying, though,' she added, loosening

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the strings of her cloak 'Phew, now I'm warmer.'

Not a very prudent way of conveying the information, he thought in his nervousness, visiting him at ten o'clock. It was odd how these country-folk could discover things . . . Aloud, he was saying mechanically:

'Perhaps you would like to remove your cloak?'

'Indeed, yes,' she said. She flung the cloak on the floor. She wore velvet beneath, a green like grapes, and crude glassy beads.

'It was considerate of you to come and tell me,' he mumbled.

'Might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb,' she said, suddenly smiling brilliantly. 'Oh, a mandoline!' she then exclaimed, pointing to one reclining on top of the dresser. 'You play it?'

'No, it belongs to the cottage.'

'Shall I try?' She merely wanted to squat picturesquely on the hearth with the instrument. Plucking at the strings she laughed flashingly at Goodacre, who answered with a pale insecure grin. He was glad his sickness had subsided, though he was still uneasy . . . But she was certainly bright and gay, sitting there in the smooth light of the fire. Wind and cold and desolation outside. He rose and flung a log on the fire. She jumped up too.

'All these books! And is this your writing? Can I look, just a peep?' Already, laughing, she was bending over the manuscript. For a few moments she read, her laughter died

away. Then in a respectful and wondering voice, she declaimed:

"'Would that your love, beloved, had less trust in me, that it might be more anxious! But the more confident I have made you in the past, the more neglectful now I find you. Remember, I beseech you, what I have done, and pay heed to what you owe me. While with you I enjoyed carnal pleasures, many were uncertain whether I did so from love or from desire. .'"

'Oh,' she cried then, clapping her hands, 'you write like that! Beautiful.' She laughed at him with intense glee and looked exceedingly pleased. 'And I thought you wrote things that were too clever for the likes of me.'

Emboldened by her discovery and before he had time to explain, stutteringly, that his manuscript was merely a translation of work done by another, long-dead, hand, Mrs. Skelt had run at him and kissed both his cheeks with vigour.

'Mrs. . . . Mrs. Skelt!' he cried, in pain.

'Jane,' she informed him with a clean simple generosity, and snatched his limp hand. 'I admire you,' she continued in a bright canter of words that would allow of no interruption. 'All my life I've wanted to know a clever man. Because,' she added with open pride, 'I know I could understand such men. Having temperament myself. . . .'

But Goodacre was shivering again. Once, no, *twice* previously a woman had blazed up before him and made the air crackle in a way that tore his nerves

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to shreds. He gazed almost deliriously round the room, as if seeking assistance from the heaped books. How had this come upon him! He hadn't demanded it of life. Why had he to be disturbed!

Mrs. Skelt thought he was gazing round in alarm at the naked windows. 'Nobody,' she said, chuckling, 'is likely to be in the wood at this time o' night. People in their beds safe and snug by now.'

He was compelled to bring his gaze back to her. He found her holding his hand, squatting on a pouffe beside his chair. And he was too far gone into fear to repudiate her. His teeth began to chatter; his eyes, behind the thick glasses, were large as if with fever; his voice was tangled in his throat. He saw Mrs. Skelt's face shine with a gentle but none the less determined generosity.

She accepted the signs of distress as fluttering red banners of excitement. These shy, studious men, it was well-known they were fiery devils when someone had succeeded in penetrating their defences. Most murderers of women were reserved men. . . .

'If,' she said, seductively, 'you had music I would dance for you. When I was a girl I learnt some country dances. I feel like dancing to-night.'

'There is no music,' he mumbled. But she was rising from her seat, her mouth tucked into a wicked smile.

Mrs. Skelt stamped her foot vigorously. 'No matter, I can remember a song, I can hum the music.' And she began immediately, twirling her grape-green gown, stamping her feet, hands

on hips, while she hummed a swift melody. She swept round his chair, her face lifted. He saw her white throat flash past him. Quicker and quicker she leapt about the chair until almost she seemed like a perpetual ring of green closing in on him. Vaguely he remembered hearing of some animal, the weasel, which hypnotizes a rabbit thus, flashing in circles round it, until it springs . . . He sat dazed, with stiffened eyelids. Her voice rose, she was singing weirdly now, no words but a sharp throat-sound of exultation. Suddenly he knew it - she was mad. Mad. Isolation in her cottage had driven her mad. There was an insane woman in his room.

Then what he feared happened. She stopped with dreadful suddenness and, head lunging forward, sprang at him in his chair. A raucous laugh burst from her: he felt her weight plunge against him; the chair was almost knocked over. In that instant he thought he saw the fiery black liquid of her eyes spit out at him. It was too much; his nerves snapped. Goodacre swooned.

When he came back she was gently passing a wet-cold cloth over his forehead. He felt the wild night drive in from the windows. Seeing her face, he quickly shut his eyes again and, unknown to himself, groaned. After a while, however, normal consciousness returning in full measure, he sat up and mumbled:

'I'm quite all right now, quite all right.' And refused to look at her.

'I couldn't find brandy or any-

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thing,' she gasped. 'Lord, you gave me a fright.'

'I'm quite all right now,' he repeated.

'It was only a faint?' she asked anxiously. 'Not a fit?' Still he would not look at her.

'I'm quite all right now,' he said yet again.

'So you keep on saying. As if you're not really. Did you ought to be alone?'

'Oh yes, oh yes,' he said with such unusual declamation that at last she received the inner meaning. 'I'm *entirely* all right. Quite well.' He gazed sternly into the dying fire.

Mrs Skelt reached for the citron-coloured cloak fallen beside the hearth; he saw her hand stretch out for it blindly, as if her mind was not in the action. He rose and stood waiting, but looking away. She tied the cloak-strings mechanically. Then she said:

'The wind's still up on its hind legs.'

'A rough night,' he said.

She walked to the door. He lifted the lamp from the table, followed her into the hall. No word was spoken while he unlatched the door. So remote was he that it did not occur to him to offer his services as escort. The wind sprang into the hall, the night was sable. She turned on the doorstep.

'Come and have tea soon, won't you!' Her voice was beginning to dart again.

'Yes, yes, of course,' he said, hidden behind the lamp. 'I'll hold up the lamp until you're out of the gate.'

She stepped out. The wind ran after her down the garden, the trees of the great wood shuddered. He waited until she had disappeared into the dark and then quickly bolted the door.

Thoughts after Glyndebourne

by W. J. Turner

I

THE plain unvarnished truth is never told in daily musical criticism, even in the most honest, enlightened and independent of journals, and for what appears to be one good solid reason, namely, the fear of spoiling the business of organizations which provide music-lovers with music. Most of these enterprises exist so precariously that a breath of hostile criticism would annihilate them. Hence the guarded, conventional unconvincing phrases we may read when opening any morning newspaper after a first performance at Covent Garden. Hence, also, the complete lack of authority of all our musical critics who, when they are perceptive – an assumption not to be made too freely – are, as it were, self-gagged. Of the ignorant and the prejudicial I do not speak; they exist but they are beneath notice and in fact nobody notices them.

Now that the Covent Garden opera season is over I will allow myself to speak more freely here than I should be allowed, or even wish, to speak while it was still going on. All music-lovers – except those extremists who think the only way to improve things is to start

by the ruthless destruction of what is bad – feel, if they do not think, kindly of Covent Garden and its annual international opera season. The extremists may be right and our attitude may be wrong but I am yet to be convinced that the only way to get good opera is to start by having no opera and if Covent Garden were ruthlessly criticized we might certainly be left without any opera at all in London except that given in English by the Vic-Wells Company.

I must make it quite clear that I think there is a place in every art for work that is below the best. Mediocre works of art and mediocre performances have their proper place in the scheme of things and any attempt to abolish or belittle the mediocre would meet with the utmost hostility from me. This is where, in opera, the Vic-Wells Company has its rightful place. At the 'Old Vic' and at Sadler's Wells you never hear anything but mediocre performances of great works; but this mediocrity is an honest mediocrity and one whose standard is constantly rising. Therefore I (and a more disgruntled, captious and hateful critic than myself

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I cannot imagine!) can go often to the Vic-Wells opera and enjoy myself. In their performances of Mozart, Verdi, Gluck and Rossini the musicians and singers are all giving of their best and sometimes their best is very creditable. At the least one can make an acquaintance with great works there and prepare oneself for more enlightening and complete realizations of these great works.

But at Covent Garden, and at Stratford on Avon, about which I shall have something to say later, one expects more than this. The function, the only reason for the existence of the International season at Covent Garden, is that we shall be presented with the best that can be achieved in Europe to-day. But in practice this is very far from happening. And now it is the time and this is the place to speak frankly about this year's season at Covent Garden.

In the German season, owing to the presence of a great number of highly trained, gifted and experienced German singers in the cast, the performances of Wagner's 'Ring' were tolerably good; but, in my opinion, under a more thoroughly trained German opera conductor the performances would have been musically much better than under Sir Thomas Beecham. It is hard to find anything to say against Sir Thomas Beecham because he is both gifted and hard-working; but he has the virtuoso temperament and I think he is best as a star-virtuoso with his own orchestra in orchestral pieces which as far as possible lend themselves to being orchestral solos.

Nevertheless he is so gifted and has such a lively temperament that he might make of one opera – which he did not necessarily choose for himself – a production of such outstanding merit as to be in a class by itself. That would be more likely to happen if he chose Rossini rather than Mozart. As an artistic director in sole control of an opera house he is not in my opinion in his right place, for he is not patiently and constructively and critically exacting enough. In other words he lacks the strictest musical self-discipline that has become almost second nature in the best German conductors owing to their intense inter-competition, high technical standards and almost daily practice in opera production.

If I had been artistic director of the season just concluded at Covent Garden I should have been taken ill after the restless and wobbly performance of *Die Meistersinger*; but I should have committed suicide after the, to me, disheartening performance of *Otello*. But before committing suicide I should have summoned the producer, Dr. Otto Erhardt, into my presence and I should have said to him: 'I am going to commit suicide – but I insist on your killing yourself before I do.'

The ordinary opera lover who heard *Otello* may ask: 'But what was wrong with it, it seemed to go with plenty of energy, Lauritz Melchior let out some terrific notes and the whole thing rather impressed me?' Now, although I might reply that besides the terrific notes that Melchior sang there were a lot of unterrific notes that he did

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not sing; that the choruses sang rather like Melchior; that Desdemona had a lot of tremolo in her voice; that Iago sang with that beautiful monotony characteristic of singers with good voices and with everything else rather less good; that Beecham put more physical than mental energy into his reading of the score – though I might say all this, and a lot more about the stage-management, it would convey little to the reader of the great, the vast, the indescribable gulf between such a performance of *Otello* and a really first-rate performance and the consequent effects upon the audience.

Germany and Russia are both full of state or town-subsidized opera houses and theatres. Without these we can never in England hope to attain to the best continental level of production. There seems little hope – partly owing to the lack of decentralization in England – of our getting these advantages; but another prospect, fortunately, opens before us and this is in the development of a Festival theatre on a plan like the Bayreuth Festival in Germany or the Salzburg Festival in Austria. For much of what is unsatisfactory at Covent Garden is due to the isolated character of its performances, the short duration of the season, the apparent necessity of crowding too many different productions into a very short period with the consequent inadequacy of rehearsals and the high overhead charges which make it economically necessary to do without the best singers (not 'stars' necessarily) and the best ensembles obtainable.

II

This year, however, for the first time in England we have had a Festival Opera House giving a fortnight's season of opera which has revealed to all who heard it the artistic possibilities of such an institution. I refer to Mr. John Christie's Glyndebourne Opera House, near Lewes, Sussex. Mr. Christie, who is a rich man, has built on to his old Manor House at Glyndebourne a theatre which holds three hundred persons and has an orchestral pit capable of taking seventy musicians. The stage is equipped with the most modern plant and the acoustics of the hall are excellent when full. Mr. Christie has not intended this Opera House to be a plaything for his private amusement but has definitely had the famous annual Salzburg Festival in his mind and has wished to make Glyndebourne a similar festival resort for lovers of music. He has thus built a large refreshment hall capable of seating three hundred persons and the whole establishment is efficiently and practically run under an experienced and capable business manager. For the opening season of a fortnight from Monday, May 28th to Saturday, June 9th, special trains were run from Victoria to Lewes, and back again after the performances at reduced rates and motor coaches met these trains and conveyed all seat-holders to and from the Glyndebourne Opera House. The performances began at a quarter past five every evening except Fridays when

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in order to accommodate people who could not get away so early from London or the country round the performances began at 7 o'clock. In either case one would arrive back in London before midnight.

I must confess that I went to the opening production of *Figaro* expecting to see and hear at best a mediocre performance. Why indeed should it be otherwise? Even the fact that a German conductor from one of the most famous of German opera houses (the Dresden State Opera), namely Fritz Busch, had been engaged did not mean very much to me. I am far too old a hand to be impressed by name or reputation. I know only too well how these can be gained to-day by publicity and other methods and how rare it is even in the professional musical world to meet with anyone whose judgment in these matters is to be relied upon. Therefore how was it possible that an amateur like Mr John Christie could possibly have the luck to be brought into contact with the right people? I could name half a dozen famous conductors he might have engaged with miserable results.

By some miracle, however, it happened that he chose Fritz Busch from Dresden as conductor, Carl Ebert from Berlin as producer and Hamish Wilson as scenic designer. The results can only be described as extraordinary. I assume that Fritz Busch was responsible for choosing the casts and that he had almost a free hand. I say almost because Mrs. Christie (Audrey Mildmay) took the role of Susanna in

Figaro and there were a few other English singers in both the operas produced, *Figaro* and *Così Fan Tutte*. But Audrey Mildmay was a charming and efficient Susanna and the other English singers while not quite up to the standard of the Austrian, German, Italian and Czech singers were well drilled enough and serious enough not to spoil the ensemble. There was one exception to this statement, namely, Ina Souez who took the part of Fiordiligi in *Così Fan Tutte*; she is described on the programme as English and as having appeared at Covent Garden and La Scala, Milan. I do not remember ever hearing her at Covent Garden but her performance in *Così Fan Tutte* was absolutely magnificent.

The *Figaro* was the best production of *Figaro* that I have ever heard in this country. The *Così Fan Tutte* was even better; it was the best production of this wonderful masterpiece that I have ever heard anywhere in Europe in my lifetime. In fact it was a simply marvellous performance, absolutely hair-raising in its vitality and as near perfection as anyone living is likely to hear in his lifetime. Now, I cannot describe to the reader the impression that these two Mozart productions made upon the music-lovers who heard them. It is not too much to say that they were a revelation even to the genuine lovers of Mozart in the audience. Even if Mr. John Christie does nothing more he has done something supremely well worth doing; he has given musicians a chance to show what extraordinary things, what

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astonishingly beautiful things, are possible by artists who have real standards and who genuinely and disinterestedly love music.

III

But now we come to the question whether Mr. Christie can ever succeed in making Glyndebourne a festival centre comparable to Salzburg, and it is here that I have my doubts. These doubts have nothing to do with the idea in itself. A festival centre, such as Salzburg, with the best possible productions of our cultural heritage in the great masterpieces of music and drama is badly needed in England. There is a very large public awaiting it. Such a centre must be outside London and it must offer the attractions of a beautiful site and attractive surrounding country to which people can go in a truly festive spirit throwing aside all the distractions and disturbances of city life to come nearer to nature and to art.

But for such a purpose a small town like Salzburg is necessary. Salzburg is also a very beautiful town set in magnificent country. Glyndebourne is not only a mere village but it is by the shortest cut across the downs some three miles from Lewes. This compared with Salzburg is a great disadvantage. The second disadvantage is, that the theatre at Glyndebourne is so small that it can never be managed so as to cover expenses except at extremely high prices. The lowest-priced seat for this first season costs thirty shillings.

There are two theatres at Salzburg both bigger than Glyndebourne and there are many other amenities, such as excellent cafés and restaurants and fine Baroque churches. Glyndebourne must remain inaccessible to numbers of music-lovers who would most enjoy it and it has nothing but the theatre, the grounds of Mr. Christie's house and the beautiful surrounding country to offer. If it were less expensive it might attract people from Eastbourne and Brighton and even Lewes might be able to hold fifty to a hundred visitors in the summer. But the number of people who can afford to pay thirty shillings for a seat and who are also discriminating lovers of music is limited and certainly not numerous enough ever to suffice to make Glyndebourne into an English Salzburg. I am informed that Mr. Christie has lost some thousands of pounds over his initial season. I expect him – if he continues on the present basis – to lose more in subsequent seasons; because the thirty shillings a seat public is mostly a fickle public and when the novelty has worn off this public will desert Glyndebourne for something else. There is only one thing as far as I can see that Mr. Christie can do and that is to have a short annual season on which he is prepared to lose a definite sum of money every year. The idea of putting Glyndebourne on a paying basis is a mere hallucination. By all means let it be managed efficiently. That is always an essential virtue. But to try to make it pay is hopeless and absurd and doomed to end in failure.

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And why should everything be made to pay? The world is richer to-day than a hundred years ago. Yet a hundred years ago such a relatively insignificant German Prince as Prince Friedrich Wilhelm zu Hohenzollern-Hechingen had his own private Orchestra of sixty musicians at Lowenberg when, for example, he invited Berlioz in 1863 to conduct a festival of his own compositions. Are there to be no private patrons of art to-day who can do as much? And the Grand Duke at Weimar in the fifties of last century gave the direction of his Court theatre into the hands of Liszt who made it one of the cultural centres of German musical life, producing there, for the first time in Germany, both Berlioz's *Beuvenuto Cellini* and Wagner's *Lohengrin*. Such theatres did not pay, were not expected to pay. Moreover the attitude was one of complete respect towards art not towards money. For example Berlioz writes to Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein in Weimar that when a great masterpiece like Gluck's *Alceste* is given there then the Grand Duke should send a ham and a bottle of wine to every bourgeois and beg him to stay away.

I personally, would like to have excluded from the performance of *Così Fan Tutte* at Glyndebourne many of the people I saw there. But I know this is impracticable. The bourgeois, the philistine – give him what name you will – you can never locate him (or her) for he belongs to no one class, stratum, occupation or profession – will always be present and unappre-

ciative. It is his lack of appreciation not his presence that I object to. How Mr. Christie is to preserve Glyndebourne from such people, who are certainly already among his acquaintances, if not his friends, and are saying to him: 'Yes, Mozart is very nice, now give us *Parsifal*'. Or perhaps, they say 'Yes Fritz Busch was very good now let us have . . .' – well, the law of libel makes it too dangerous for me to name the famous conductors whom our philistine would choose with the same lack of discrimination that makes him mention Mozart and Wagner in the same breath

I fervently hope that Mr Christie will be able to maintain Glyndebourne and that he will in the future give us productions of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Gluck's *Alceste*, *Armide*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Orpheus*, and Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict*. There is a marvellous programme to set before the music-lover! If Mr. Christie secures productions of the great works I have named on the same high level as the production of *Così Fan Tutte* then he will have achieved something worth doing and something far superior to anything that has been done in England before in opera

And is there any reason why he should not produce drama at Glyndebourne as well as opera? Is it not strange and disgraceful that we have never witnessed in our lifetime, in England, a really first-class Shakespearean production? I have never in my life heard a performance of any play by Shakespeare that came any-

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where near the level of the performances of *Figaro* and *Così Fan Tutte* at Glyndebourne. If we heard *Troilus and Cressida*, for example, in a production of the same high standard as regards individual acting and speaking and in general ensemble as the production of *Così Fan Tutte* we should have a revelation that would amaze us. But where should we get the actors? For Mozart we have to import singers from abroad, because in spite of what our pseudo-patriots say we have *no* English singers as good as the best foreign singers; they may have – some of them – good voices but they are inferior artists, without the high standard of training of foreign singers.

Similarly, we have no first-rate company of English actors. We have a great deal of individual talent which goes to seed for lack of the opportunities which a Festival Theatre with a director worthy of such a position would give them. But the speaking of verse in England is on as low a level as our singing and so this mere fundamental is lacking. The endowed memorial theatre at Stratford on Avon should be fulfilling this function of a Festival theatre but it is not. The productions of Shakespeare at Stratford on Avon are on the ordinary level of a mediocre touring company. Only an extreme, almost fanatical, love of Shakespeare can drive one to the performances at Stratford on Avon. One never gets

a revelation, not even the ghost of a revelation there! Yet the Governors of Stratford on Avon are well-meaning people who would naturally like to make Stratford on Avon into an English Salzburg. What is lacking? It is the *quality*, the high quality which comes of a continuous endeavour by many very gifted artists that is lacking. When are we to find a director of Stratford on Avon of the same standard as such musical directors as Fritz Busch of the Dresden Opera House or of Otto Klemperer late of the Berlin State Opera House or of Georg Szell of Prague? They do not exist in England. There is no English producer known to me who starts with the elementary essential quality of being an artist. They are all semi-business men with one eye on the box-office and the other eye – in heaven, perhaps, certainly not on solid earth. The one English producer known to me with the nature of an artist and the gifts of an artist is Gordon Craig and he has been wasted; he is now possibly too old and too disillusioned to be active again in a theatre. This is the plain unvarnished tale of our present position in England in the theatre and opera house. Glyndebourne is a portent perhaps of a new era. It is so badly wanted, so deeply longed for by the younger generation – this new era of music and drama – that perhaps we shall get it.

In Le Havre

by Malcolm Lowry

A ship crossed, and beyond
Hull down, the lone sea's curve. — *Clere Parsons*

HOTEL-CAFE-BAR
À TOUT VA BIEN
Confort Moderne

LISTEN,
*the far threnody of sirens in the haze;
remembered telegraph wires, multitudinously,
distant; in New York, will you hear them,
my girl, my girl?*

'You're an American, you know America? Yes. I'm English. I'm English, but I married an American girl, about five months ago. She's gone, I've just seen her off to the States.'

'What ship?'

'The *Ile de France*.'

'I know. French Line. That must have been her. Just now. I saw her out of the window.'

'Out of the window? Yes? God, I feel dead: I feel as though my whole inside had been taken out: all I feel inside is a smouldering hollow, an excavation.'

'Couldn't you go with her?'

'Do you think I'd be here if I could?'

'Well, why did she go, then?'

'Oh: she had an operation, there were complications. It went wrong.'

'That's hardly a good reason; better reason for staying, it seems to me.'

'Oh, anyway, she'd been travelling round Europe, and she had to go back to see her mother. She's been away for two years.'

'We all have to go back – and for the same reason. But you must think of her pain.'

'I do, I do. God, if you only knew how I do. I hope she doesn't love me if it hurts like this: no, but she does. I not only think of her pain, but I understand for the first time how mothers suffer for their children, and children suffer for them, oh, and fathers too, and why children are so cruel to the mothers. I would love to help all those who are desolate like that with pain, or forsaken by their loved ones'.

'I know; I know what it's like. Oh, don't I just? Why, it was just the same with me. The same thing happened to me'.

'Stop griping. Why beef about it? I left a girl the same way, in New York, I had to leave her and come

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here. Just a newspaperman's life. It happens to every one of us'.

'But it wasn't so bad until I suddenly realized what I had lost. God, when shall I ever see her again? What have I done to deserve losing her?'

'But, you'll see her again soon. You haven't lost her?'

'No, I haven't lost her, but I liked her so much. Oh, I loved her, and love her, and she me, but somehow there was nobody ever so nice as her.'

'Why did you let her go?'

'Why did you leave *her*?'

'Oh, why indeed, why indeed?'

'I can't say. I thought it was better for her to go. Why, I even found myself wanting her to go. We were too happy, too happy, it couldn't last; and then she wanted to be home for her mother's birthday. Except that I'm not sure, even now, she is well, I should have wished her to be gone; for a time, only, for a time, it would have been good to be alone, to have prepared myself, to have straightened out my life a little, to have re-established myself, before meeting again.'

'If then, as you say, it was too early, why did you let her go? Especially by herself?'

'She seemed well just afterwards, she seemed splendid, they thought she was well enough, I thought she was, she thought so herself. For all I know she may have been, they gave her a week, ten days, I thought so, *before*. . . '

'Oh yeah?'

'Even in the hospital it was lovely. My heart would break within me when I

saw *Direction Porte Maillot* even; and the blue days, blue sea days; the sunlight, the afternoon sunlight coming through the bright hospital window; and I would get her flowers, and bring her mail from the American Express. Nothing ever was as white as that room where my wife was getting better. I had never loved her so much as then.'

'But what's this talk about love? What does it mean? You like to be with her. She doesn't bore you. It's nice for a time. But what's good for one time isn't always good for another. You'll find that out sooner or later. Just as you like living, but you have to die sooner or later. Only probably sooner.'

'I found something you lost – and kept it. And shall keep it!'

'And kept it? Kept what? Didn't you say yourself you'd just lost her? *You* don't love her.'

'But, oh God, that's what I told her just as she sailed; that's what's so awful. She was so distant and pre-occupied on the boat train, and our last night had been a failure. She seemed so well, to have recovered so marvellously, she was even hungry and I'd taken her to her favourite restaurant, but as soon as she got there she couldn't eat: then afterwards she said she'd like a drink, and I took her to the Martinique Rhumerie in Saint Germain where we'd been our first night in Paris, and where we met someone we knew and we talked a little. Seeing she was tired I asked her if she wished to go home, but she replied: *I'm* going home, but you stay and talk to your friend. That hurt me so terribly. . . '

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'You're staying and talking to him now instead?'

'Then again on the boat-train this morning, it was a reaction; she was distant and pre-occupied, and then that fuss with baggage, the stewards, the chaos on the deck, the noise. Once on the ship she said something which angered me so that, in that extraordinary complete stillness which precedes a ship's sailing, I replied savagely: Oh, I don't love you; I never have loved you; it was just a caprice on my part. I married you to satisfy my own vanity, I was just getting one back on the old man. To hell with it all, I don't love you and never have done, and you can have the custody of the child. She turned white, but all she said was, in a kind of whisper: "There was another blood clot just now, but that must have been all right, don't you think?"' At that moment we lost sight of each other in the crowd. Then I had to make a bolt for it; the gangway was being taken in.'

'Make a bolt for it? Why didn't you stay on board?'

'I hadn't enough money for the passage. God, I wanted to have children in the sun, but now I wish I'd never been born too.'

'Drink won't help you any.'

'Oh, hell's like pink elephants. I know all of that one. But *this* is true; it's happening, now, to me.'

'Why can't you go?'

'I've got my job in Paris.'

'You haven't got any job in Paris. You've only got one job, and that is to go there too, and be with her. Now.

And you're going, inside the next few weeks.'

'That wouldn't be right either. But I want . . . '

'We'll find out by wireless. But she's all right, I know it. I've got a wireless in my head. Oh, you're going to be all right. You never been to the States?'

'But I want to see where she lives, and be born where she was born. But I can't go. I can't.'

'No, son, your duty is to go back to her. It isn't love that dies. It's yourself, exhausted with the struggle, worn out behind a barrier of time, in pursuit of the nymph on the brake; in the pursuit of richness. Sure. I know what I was like myself; and I didn't go back. And look at me. I'm a kind of corpse myself! a stiff. I went from woman to woman, hoarding up that richness, that variety. Now I suffer the penalty of the miser. I no longer want to use that store. I can't use it, it's buried; but within me where I can no longer touch it. And my dead are buried around me . . . That's hell, they say, to experience desires which you can no longer gratify. And yet my desire is not to use the riches I have gotten, but to look in at what I have gathered, at the harvest I have reaped. But the harvest is sad and dead and done, inside me. I can see nothing inside me but the dead. "My ragges of heart can like, wish and adore, but after one such love can love no more." You know. Oh, you'll never understand what it is just to feel remorse for a place; but that's all that's left in the

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end – remorse for a street where you held her hand.’

‘Her. Only the word *her* moves me somehow’

‘But only for the street. To forget the face. Only for the street-lamp, where you paused to say good-bye The canal The vacant lot. For the red and green lights in the night slipping down to the sea. Where does she live? New York?’

‘New York – well, Westchester, or whatever it is.’

‘New York. New York, eh, where the ship’s bound for, where the ship came from, where ships come from, the sea between. God, that terrible, terrible sea. Such a lot of places. Such a terrible lot of . . . Westchester, eh? Why, I know every Justice in Westchester County. Had to. Ever seen Mamaroneck?’

‘No, but. . . .’

‘Ossining?’

‘No, but’

‘Dobbs Ferry?’

‘Yes, but she’

‘Mount Kisko?’

‘No, she. . . .’

‘Oh, whenever I think of all those places, eh? All my life’s there, buried. Drowned in all sorts of different places. Different rivers. Larchmont, where the big money lives. Chappaqua, Peekskill. . . .’

‘You see, I’ve never been to the States, myself, but I’ve longed to. She loved those places. She came from there some place.’

‘But Jesus. The city: East 45th Street . . . Ah, my God, I would give my right hand – well, I would give

these three fingers of my right hand. I’m not pounding out much material, now this riot story is dead. Not with these digits anyhow. But I just want to hear that racket of the 2nd Avenue El coming through those doors behind me. Just once. Oh, Jesus. You will never understand, never, never. You can never understand unless you’ve been there.’

‘She wanted the sound of the overhead more, I used to think sometimes, than the sound of my English voice.’

‘You walk down 45th Street, down towards East River. You pass the mid-town press of the *Sun*. . . .’

‘Lee felt that way sometimes; homesick. Lee, the small word that even the poor train speaks.’

‘And the song of the presses is shaking the very street. You know, if you turn your back on them you can believe you’re on a ship : . . and then on. And Farrell, the cop. Yes, he’s always there. And then, you will never, never believe me, but strike me dead if I’m wrong. . . .’

‘I can believe anything – now.’

‘A nunnery. Yes. I have all this deep down within me. You will never, never understand. The drunks, terrible, terrible drunks such as you can’t know of. In front of my brownstone a man has starved to death, a tuxedo-d big-shot with a Corona-Corona stuck in his face stepped over him into his favourite speak. Or you are walking along the dock and you see something in the water. What is it? Well, it might be an old pulpy bundle of newspapers. It might be a big turtle the way they float in the gulf of Tehantapec. It might be

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a turtle, just about like a turtle at that. Just before they stick their heads up out of the water, you know. Look at the way it's drifting in towards us. Closer and closer. Look here, you turtle, or whatever you are, why pick on us? Isn't Welfare Island good enough for you? Why don't you drift across to that haven of refuge. You might just as well, you know. It's just across the way. I'm sure the Commissioner won't mind. Maybe some of the boys are looking for a fourth at bridge. Leave off, urchins; away with you. Scram! Don't pull at my turtle like that. Let him alone. This is where he gets off, at Queensboro bridge. He'll be all right as soon as he's had some black coffee. And hello, what's this? The police boat. Your lights are bright, Mr. Charon. What's that dim brass-buttoned shadow in the mauve-grey of the river fog? Not Mr. Sisyphus too? Not *the* Mr. Sisyphus? Well, gentlemen, this is a pleasure. Did you know a rolling stone gathers no moss, Mr. Sisyphus? Ah, you did? Roll, Sisyphus, roll. There's only one more river to cross. Gentlemen, charge your bumpers. I give you Mr. Sisyphus. Keep him. And, Mr. Charon, my best to Cerberus. Throw him a bone for me. I'm sorry, I meant three. Throw him three bones. You can spare a brace of tibia, surely. But see here. Don't pull at my turtle with your boat hook. Hey! That hurts my turtle more than it does you, Mr. Charon. And hey. Look here, old man, you can't drag my turtle up on the dock that way. I don't like that at all,

you know. And you can imagine how the Phoenix would carry on were she to see you. And what in the world are *you* doing, turning him over in that way? White face, white hands. Not white though, not white; sort of puffed and greeny. The seams of that brown bedraggled overcoat are bursting. Yes, why, of course a turtle in a brown overcoat, what could be more natural? Just a turtle? No. That's no turtle, mister. That's just a stiff. Oh pardon, only a stiff. Hyah, Farrell. Hello, Skitch, you're here early. Don't forget, this time, it's two r's. You always get it wrong. Not very nice, Farrell, do you think? No sir, and I don't suppose it was very nice on the bridge. It must have been cold there, come to think of it, on the bridge in the night. You know the way it is. So I walked over to Louis's on 17th street. But no turtle ever solved his problem that way.'

'I wouldn't do that, of course.'

Listen,

the far threnody of sirens in the haze; remembered telegraph wires, multitudinously, distant: in New York, will you hear them, my girl, my girl? . . .

'Listen, we were really as happy as two human beings can be.'

'Then you must go after her soon. She loves you.'

'But if only I had said then, I love you so. Why did I say, I hate you, I never loved you?'

'Listen, the hell with you and your Lee. You only love your own misery.'

The man and his ghost left the café and walked slowly down towards the forsaken sea.

Poetry in Schools

by John Pendry

I

YOU cannot think about one part of a school curriculum without considering its teaching as a whole; you cannot discuss this without considering contemporary educational ideals, and you cannot isolate these from the basic social environment in which they are meant to operate. These reflections, therefore, have no conclusion within the writer's province of knowledge; their beginning lies in a daily concern with the teaching of poetry, and a growing conviction that to the teacher of poetry the problems of popular education present themselves very distinctly.

A large, and hitherto increasing, volume of education is being administered to children of all ages. Even if you do not 'believe in' popular *education*, you must admit the certainty that a great deal of *teaching* will continue to be done; for the idea that education is a good thing is still universal among responsible groups of people; and besides, it is necessary, when the majority of people live in large towns, to give children something to do during the years between infancy and the time when they begin earning a living.

There is also a great deal of expensive and unadaptable educational plant in existence. So if all this teaching is not to be wasted, the relation between education and life must be properly defined, and the relation of teaching to educational aims must be practical. In the case of poetry there is confusion and inadequacy under both heads; the fault lies either in educational ideals, or in the teaching of poetry, or in social conditions – probably, in all three. But here I am concerned with demonstrating the confusion and inadequacy.

The ideals which direct popular education are not indigenous: they are imposed on the uneducated classes by the educated. They do not arise spontaneously from working-class conditions, but are the expression of what educationists think the working-classes need. Their conception of working-class needs is naturally theoretical, since all popular education has been administered by the governing class, downwards: education, in other words, is not a popular idea at all, and educational ideals reflect the educational needs

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of the governing class. The education of the Public Schools derives not so much from the actual teaching as from the 'System', which is admirably adapted for training boys to be administrators; if they are to belong to a profession they get their technical training elsewhere; the actual teaching is largely superfluous (except for the small percentage of boys destined for academic careers) and is subordinated to the demands of the System. The demand for a different kind of ability has not yet grown sufficiently to affect the main Public School idea of education, which is, broadly, to produce in boys the sort of character and mentality capable of dealing with administrative situations in government, the professions and commerce.

This idea is obviously unsuitable for the mass of working-class education; and to some extent, of course, the educationists realize this. But it persists, and in the main inspires most working-class education. (Although Greek has largely been dropped in Council schools, Latin, the mainstay of Public School education, still prevails; and while it may be an excellent training for potential Empire-builders it is quite unsuitable for potential clerks and foremen.) Perhaps it would be as well, before going any farther, to examine a representative statement of the official view.

The passages which I shall examine here are from a report on the teaching of English made in 1921 by a Committee appointed by the Board of Education. (*The Teaching of English*

in England. H.M. Stationery Office, 1921.) I refer to this because it is a convenient statement of educational ideas which I know from experience to be very widely accepted.

However men may differ (the Committee argue) as to the relative importance of different objects in life, the majority are right in feeling that education should directly bear upon life, that no part of the process should be without a purpose intelligible to everyone concerned.

So far so good. The crucial point of the above is the word 'life', about which the Committee have more to say later. About the process of education the Committee say:

It proceeds not by the presentation of lifeless facts, but by teaching the student to follow the different lines on which life may be explored and proficiency in living may be obtained. It is, in a word, guidance in the acquiring of experience. Under this general term are included experiences of different kinds; those which are obtained, for example, by manual work, or by the orderly investigation of matter and its qualities. The most valuable for all purposes are those experiences of human relations which are gained by contact with human beings. This contact may take place in the intercourse of the classroom, the playground, the home, and the outer world, or solely in the inner world of thought and feeling, through the

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personal records of action and experience known to us under the form of literature.

The difficulty of defining 'experience' is here neatly dodged by implying that it is something which includes 'experiences' of different kinds, some of them 'valuable for all purposes'. However, the nature of education is settled: it is 'guidance in the acquiring of experience'.

Not only must the nature of education be clearly understood (the Committee continue), but it will be a matter of equal importance that the teacher, at any rate, and the student, as soon as may be, should have clear and well founded ideas about morals, science and art. They must feel, and as far as possible understand the direct interest of these as bearing upon practical life and the equipment for it. It has long been accepted, and at the present day it has been reiterated with great force by such teachers as the Dean of St. Paul's and Mr. Clutton Brock, that the three main motives which actuate the human spirit are the love of goodness, the love of truth and the love of beauty.

Of goodness, truth and beauty the Committee report, later:

Man loves all these by nature and for their own sake only. Taken together, they are, in the highest sense, his life, and no system of education can claim to be ade-

quate if it does not help him to develop these natural and disinterested loves.

The Committee, then, appear to distinguish between two forms of life: 'practical life', and a higher form consisting of the love of goodness, truth and beauty. Literature, while ministering directly to the latter, must be shown to have a real bearing on the former:

Among the best things which education can give are certainly freedom and independence of thought, a wide outlook on life, and a strong sense of the difference between convention and reality. A less trammelled life has given these in some degree to our men overseas. Literature, which is still more untrammelled, as well as wider and more penetrating, will give them to the children of this country in a still greater degree and from an earlier age. But if it is to do this the teacher must keep it close to life; in no case must the real or practical bearing of the experience be neglected or avoided. And, as Wordsworth saw, though all great literatures will present deep and universal truths, in education that will be the more intelligible and powerful which presents the student with experience of time and circumstances more nearly related to his own.

In all this there is a full admission of the claims of practical life, but there is no understanding of the irreconcil-

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ability of humanistic education, which aims at ministering to the higher life (love of goodness, truth and beauty), with the conditions of practical life among the uneducated class. To the administrator class, for which the old humanistic education was designed, practical life was not very important: they had leisure to cultivate, if they so wished, a love of goodness, truth and beauty. But to a man of the working-class practical life is everything; and the demands which it makes upon his time and energies are such that it is impossible for him to be, as the educationists seem to wish, an industrious 'citizen' during the day and an old-fashioned Man of Feeling in the evening. What about the Committee's conviction that 'education should directly bear upon life'? The belief that the process they call education can have any bearing at all upon working-class life is a piece of fundamental unrealism, deriving from a sentimental affection for the process, and a chronic misunderstanding of the cultural needs created by working-class conditions. Let us consider this misunderstanding.

II

Nowhere in the Report, or in liberal educational theory generally, is it suggested that education may not be able to do anything to satisfy working-class needs. There is no hint that one or the other ought to be altered, if there is to be any relation between them. There is, instead,

considerable acquiescence in the unsatisfactory conditions of working-class life. The Committee quote with approval the following, on the subject of English study in Continuation Schools.

It should evoke in [the pupil] a love of reading, both as a means of obtaining knowledge, and as one of the chief recreations and consolations of life;

and the following, on boys and girls who have left school:

If they have learnt to love books they will seldom lack friends. The drab uniformity of their lives will be illumined by imagination; they will have taken up something of their heritage of civilization; their interests and sympathies will be wider, their sense of citizenship more keen. . . .

Now this is the sort of snivelling, blessed-are-the-poor cant that makes it difficult not to jump straight out of education into sociology. If anybody is forced to live a life of drab uniformity, the less it is illumined by imagination the better, and if literature is to be used as a *consolation* of life, it is time to abolish literature and start to mend life. 'Make people feel that their own poor life is ever so little beautiful and poetical', urge the Committee, quoting Henry Sidgwick. Make people feel that if beauty and poetry are qualities of a 'poor life', they had better be put in the dust-bin.

However strong the desire of the 'human spirit' for goodness, truth and beauty in the abstract, it is certain that

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the main motives created by working-class conditions in England are a desire for security and a desire for comfort. The recreational need produced by their life and environment is for a succession of novel and easily assimilable sensations, as provided by sport and the cinema. Every expression of taste or ambition on the part of school-boys whom I teach confirms this. It is customarily supposed that boys wish to be engine-drivers and explorers: the boys in my school aspire either to the security enjoyed by a minor Civil Servant or to the comfort assured by an unearned income.

In attempting to relate education to the claims of practical life why do the educationists not admit at once the necessarily materialist character of popular aspirations? (Necessarily, because the insecurity and discomfort which afflict the working-class are the predominant realities in their lives; perhaps, also, because of the example of their 'betters'.) A liberal education gives guidance to boys of the working-class only in the acquiring of experience which they will never have the opportunity or the impulse to acquire. It is pretty generally accepted in Council schools that the Classics are of no use except to 'train the mind' – that is, as a variant on mental arithmetic; it might as well be admitted also that as a mind-trainer poetry is very inferior to Latin Prose, and as a record of human experience it will never satisfy the mass of people in an industrialized community half so well as the cinema or the evening press. This is inevitable. What

value have freedom and independence of thought to people not called on to think at all? What value has a wide outlook on life to people who live narrow lives? What good is a strong sense of the difference between convention and reality to people who would lose their jobs if they indulged it? The only kind of honest practice in popular education would be to give children a technical education which would 'equip' them for the practical lives which will be their major concern. There are, of course, technical schools, but secondary education as a whole continues the old liberal tradition, relieved of its more crudely upper class bias, but still unfitted to satisfy any working-class need, spiritual or temporal. The examinations for matriculation which determine the curriculums in secondary schools, when not actually those held in Public Schools, reproduce them pretty faithfully.

Some practical evidence may here be of interest to people not acquainted at first hand with the attitude of secondary school boys towards poetry. The evidence I quote is from answers by boys of thirteen to eighteen years old to a number of general questions about their reading and enjoyment of poetry and their opinions concerning its use. The number of boys questioned was 99. They live in some of the poorer districts of London. They were told to say what they thought about poetry in general and a number of questions was asked, merely so that they should know what kind of information was

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wanted: they were left a free hand to ignore the exact form of these questions if they had information to give which was not covered by them. They had no inducement to be purposely insincere, and I am sure that in most of their answers they were perfectly sincere, within the limits imposed by their means of expression and their easy accessibility to superficial fashions of thought. That is, the answers are truthful but not, in most cases, original. They reflect the ideas absorbed by the boys from their environment, which is exactly why I quote them. I quote them not as an authoritative statement of 'what poetry means to schoolboys' but as the schoolboys' version of those ideas which result from the impact of poetry on people living in certain social conditions. (A person whose ideas are independent of his environment is abnormal from my point of view: I am dealing with the education of a class.) The boys I am speaking of are influenced by their home-environment and their school-environment: with them (as, I imagine, with most boys in day-schools) the first is the more powerful. With regard to the school-environment, in the case of these boys, it should perhaps be mentioned that I myself, when these answers were written, had not been part of it long enough for any bias of my own to be reflected in them.

I shall let these extracts speak for themselves, since they are simple and unconfused; they are used to illustrate three things: general notions about poetry and the reading of poetry;

opinions as to the use of poetry; personal attitudes towards poetry. Under each head I have included normal views (mostly hostile) and exceptional views (favourable), the latter being to some extent an answer to the important question of *why* boys like poetry in the exceptional cases when they do like it. The references in parentheses (S and J) are to answers written respectively by boys in matriculation and post-matriculation classes (Senior) and in pre-matriculation classes (Junior).

GENERAL VIEWS ABOUT POETRY AND READING POETRY

Normal views

'Poetry is dying out.' (S)

'A modern man does not read any poetry.' (J)

'Poetry was all-right 4 or 5 centuries ago but now, in the 20th century, I do not think poetry is taken notice of.' (J)

'Most boys only read poetry in school and that is because they have to.' (J)

'Poetry is only suitable for girls to read.' (J)

'This world would not be quite so jolly if there were not any poetry . . . Not many Britishers read any poetry after they have left schools except School Masters and students.' (J)

Exceptional views

'It is obvious, I think, that a knowledge of Poetry and Good Literature should be part of everyone's education, as they help considerably to broaden the mind of those who study them.' (S)

'Poetry is part of an educated person's curriculum.' (J)

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THE USE OF POETRY

Normal views

'It rests with what position I occupy whether I will read verse of any kind after I have left school.' (J)

'Naturally the value of poetry on leaving school depends on the occupation taken up.' (S)

'It doesn't improve our chance in the world, it doesn't make us any greater, or make us poets.' (J)

'After all, what good is poetry to help you get a job after you leave school. If you go to obtain a position at an electrical engineering factory, the "boss" will not ask you to start reciting "Sohrab and Rustum."' (J)

'I don't think that poetry will be of any value to me in the future because the situation I hope to fulfil after school does not include a knowledge of poetry or Shakespeare.' (S)

'If a boy is going after a job there is no kind of a job where he would be asked to write out a poem in Blank verse or a four foot line poem or any kind of poem at all.' (J)

'An everyday working man does not have time to consider the finer qualities of poetry . . . I have great hopes of being a working man, therefore I will have no use for poetry.' (S)

'I do not think poetry is of much value to the life of a scientific student, and thus I do not think it will be of any value to me.' (S)

Exceptional views

'I think that poetry, or at least some has helped me to realize the powerfulness of a good description, and also to love the beautiful.' (J)

'For the business man, the study of poetry might help him to be a little more cultured and acquainted with other things beside accounts.' (S)

'Poetry has both taught me how to enjoy good books and writings and kept me apart a little from those whose only aim is to be a "successful" business person.' (S)

'If ever I should become very tired in mind, I am sure it will prove a soothing and resourceful tonic to me.' (S)

'I think that if one is in trouble or unhappy one can be comforted by reading appropriate poetry . . . I always read the daily poem by Wilhelmina Stitch in the *Daily Sketch*.' (S)

'With an armchair and a good book of poems who could not forget the worries and cares of this life?' (S)

PERSONAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY

Normal views

'Poetry is not at all interesting to me.' (J)

'I should much sooner read an interesting novel, than sit at home learning lines of piffle and reading how King Arthur died. I can read about that in a much more interesting form in a book called "Tales of King Arthur and his Knights".' (J)

'Poetry is all right for people who like reading that kind of stuff but I prefer a good book any time.' (J)

'I do not think that when I leave school that I should read any kind of poetry because of the little beauty, action, or interest I have found in what I have read in school.' (J)

'Not many people read poetry after

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they leave school because they hate it so much at school that they are glad to get away from it.' (J)

'I do not really think it will be any good in the future, as it's really only another way of expressing a story. (In most cases.)' (J)

Exceptional views

'I appreciate and enjoy ballads and action poetry and also personification, but vague poetry, with a cloudy subject, I cannot tolerate.' (J)

'I like it better than any other subject except Mathematics because it is easy to learn, not that I am a slacker.' (J)

'It is my opinion that poetry has been very useful to me and will be in the future and when I have not much to do I will often take a poetry book down off the shelf and read it' (J)

'Most people think that all poetry is definitely "sloppy"; but there are some very good poems. The best one I have read is "Horatius keeps the Bridge".' (J)

'I am asked whether I read any poetry out of school. Yes, certainly, I always hope to.' (J)

'It has a certain fascination, like playing cards.' (S)

'Ballads are usually about some Scotchman who drowns himself.' (J)

The classifications I have used here are somewhat elastic – the 'exceptional' views, for instance, are not strikingly exceptional. This was inevitable because the answers did, in fact, present a consistent body of opinions; even the variations caused by difference in age are slight, the

chief being a tendency for hostility to mellow into apathy as the boys increase in age.

About the nature of these opinions there can be no confusion. It is unnecessary to recapitulate them, but I should like to quote at greater length from the answer written by one boy, a thoughtful 'proletarian' of about sixteen. His point of view puts the case for poetry at its best, and is one with which I feel the greatest sympathy.

When I ask myself of what use poetry really is to the average schoolboy, I am very surprised. After thinking profoundly, I am reluctantly forced to say that poetry, in any form, will never be of any use to me after leaving school – and the same applies to many other boys of my position in life. In School, we boys are wasting our time learning all about poetry when we could be studying something which would be of use to us in our business lives. The majority of boys like myself will be clerks. In this particular occupation the amount of poetry needed is precisely none. Although I like poetry for its own sake, although I like to be lulled into living in a false world of sunshine, laughter and beauty, and although I like the swing and romance of the ballads of long ago, I still think and say that poetry is useless to the schoolboy of to-day.

And in case there should be any doubt that this view is generally prevalent among the present generation of the

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working-class, we can only refer once more to the findings of the Board of Education Committee:

We are bound to acknowledge (the Committee write) the essential truth . . . that, whatever be the cause, modern literature, including so-called democratic poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, (i) no longer springs from the life of the people, and (ii) is not generally recognized as having any direct bearing upon their life. These two factors are, in our view, sufficient in themselves to account for the present-day attitude of the working-classes towards literature. 'Is not generally recognized . . .?' Would it not be more honest to admit that modern literature *has* no direct bearing upon the lives of the working-class? Or is the suggestion that educational methods are at fault? If poetry were taught properly would not this mysterious connection be revealed, so that the working-class would neglect the cinemas, switch off the wireless, and turn to literature? It remains to examine the methods by which poetry is taught, with a view to finding out how far it is just to assume this unappreciated bearing of literature upon life.

III

'The very atmosphere of the classroom, with its paraphernalia of study, is one in which the wings of poesy cannot readily beat.' This is the Committee's version of the difficulty of

teaching poetry. It is sheer nonsense, as every reasonably capable teacher knows. If a class is interested in a lesson, it quickly forgets desks and blackboard; about which, in any case, there is nothing intrinsically unpoetic. What *does* make it difficult for the wings of poesy to beat, is the resistance exerted by the sort of feelings about poetry which I have just illustrated; and this resistance causes any teacher to whom poetry means anything personally to loath teaching poetry, though he may not always admit this to himself. Thus with most classes, any subtle or really critical study of poetry is of course out of the question. The conscientious teacher falls back on the expedient of trying to invest poetry with non-poetic interest, generally of a historical, geographical or nautical character. As the Committee observe: 'The purely technical or aesthetic appeal of any art will, perhaps, always be limited to a smaller number but, as experience of life, literature will influence all who are capable of finding recreation in something beyond mere sensation.'

That is, you cannot interest boys in poetry *as* poetry; to interest them at all you have got to present it to them as versified fiction or history. Hence the deplorable anthologies of 'Story-Poems' in use in many schools, and the intensive reading of border-ballads and the fake ballads of Noyes, Newbolt and Kipling. Then there is the very popular shipping interest: many teachers have their model lessons on Masfield's 'Cargoes' and Bridges' 'Whither, O Splendid Ship', illustrated by coloured

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pictures of clippers and possibly an olde mappe or a miniature galleon in full sail. Poetic references to old customs and beliefs are pointed out, and the more intelligent boys are made to feel 'the powerfulness of a good description'.

The chief interest exploited, however, is the narrative one. King Arthur, Robin Hood, Sir Patrick Spens, Drake, Horatius, Young Lochinvar, Hiawatha and Dick Turpin are the heroes of class-room poetry. Apart from the appalling falsification of history propagated by the reading of narrative poems, an interest in these poems does little to create respect for poetry; the boys are left with the impression that poetry is a poor way of telling a story – which indeed it is: compare Tennyson and Malory, or Newbolt and Rafael Sabatini. Again and again this view appears in the referendum from which I have quoted; and of course it is fostered by the school-books written and edited by the teachers who are responsible for, or subscribe to, the Board of Education Committee's official view.

The only escape from this, the only way to persuade boys that poetry is not a bad (or even good) way of telling a story, or a bad or good way of describing nature, is somehow to make them responsive to the 'purely technical or aesthetic appeal' of poetry. I believe this is easier to do than the Committee suggest; in any case, the 'experience of life' represented by a poem will never be fully or rightly understood without some appreciation

of its technical and aesthetic processes. But ultimately the question of whether poetry can successfully be taught to working-class children depends on how far it is 'recognized as having any bearing', direct or indirect, upon their life.

I say 'direct or indirect' deliberately, because it should be realized at once, as the Committee fail to realize, that the 'direct bearing' of a work of art on a person's life has nothing to do with his enjoyment of it. The periodicals which boys read and the films which they see – those things in fact which really occupy and satisfy their imagination – if they contain one constant element it is that of *remoteness* from life as the boys live it. It is no excuse for poetry to say that the story of King Arthur has little direct bearing on modern life; nor have the stories in the 'Magnet' or the 'Wizard'. It is no use urging that the poetry of Wordsworth is about flowers and trees which working-class boys rarely see: so are the films of Walt Disney. The content of poetry is not the reason why nobody reads it.

What is important, however, is whether or not poetry has any *indirect* bearing upon people's lives. The public for English poetry from, say, the early eighteenth century onwards, must have consisted of people in far different circumstances from those of present-day working men. Poetry satisfied certain social, intellectual and emotional needs arising, directly or indirectly, from environment. The modern work-

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ing-class environment is a comparatively new thing. I do not believe that the needs created by it are completely satisfied by present-day amusements, but it is certain that they are less likely to be satisfied by poetry. If you think of the names of the best English poets and then try to imagine the lives of the many readers who have acquired experience from these poets, can you point to any considerable similarity between these lives and the lives led by the mass of people to-day?

It is doubtful whether the poorest strata of society have ever enjoyed poetry to any great extent. 'It is natural for man to delight in poetry,' the Committee maintain; 'the history of medieval society, to say nothing of all primitive societies, proves this.' Does it? I wonder how much of the medieval ballads would be considered by the Committee to be poetry of any merit. Or do they refer to the crude doggerel in which, for the most part, the knock-about farces and sensational tragedies of the medieval stage were written? And considering the opportunities for writing poetry which a blank-verse convention offers, what a small proportion of poetry there is in Elizabethan drama.

But that is not the point. Whatever primitive and medieval societies thought about poetry, and to whatever extent their life expressed itself in poetry, nobody in England is at present living in a primitive or medieval society; our recreations are therefore not the same. I am sceptical about notions as to what is 'natural' for man;

at any rate, if there is anything natural about working-class conditions at present men must have been living unnatural lives for a great many centuries. Industrialism has produced new conditions, and new conditions create new needs. There is no ground for supposing that poetry produced in an agricultural society, or by an intellectual aristocracy, can ever be shown to have the power of satisfying modern needs. There is every reason to suppose that it is false to try to recognize poetry as having any bearing whatever on the lives of the working-class.

An increased understanding of poetry, then, will not do much to make the children of the working-class into better people. Because they do not love poetry, the Committee assert, 'the bulk of our people, of whatever class, are unconsciously living starved existences'. And they conclude: 'It is easy to blame Education for this, but Education cannot proceed far in advance of the general outlook of its age. The true cause lies deeper, is rooted among the very foundations of our civilization. Yet we believe that it belongs to a transitory phase of human development and will, therefore, in course of time cease to operate.' In these words the official educationists write off their responsibility to the working-class. 'The bulk of our people, of whatever class' they say, as if everybody, upper and lower classes alike, were in the same boat and it is all the fault of the 'general outlook' of the age. But the education of the lower classes is in

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the hands of the upper; if the upper classes are living starved existences they have nobody but themselves to blame. And who is responsible for the general outlook of the age? To whom but to the educationists can we look for an improvement of the outlook? The educationists, it appears, retire from the engagement, content to contemplate a phase of human development in which the cause of the trouble will 'cease to operate'.

It may seem that I have taken too much notice of the findings of one educational committee, and laid too much stress on the answers to one schoolboy questionnaire. But the question I have discussed is important, and the evidence is representative. That the findings of the committee are thirteen years' old is

no reason for supposing that views may be different now. In my experience they are not. The teachers whose evidence helped to form the committee's views are still teaching; the textbooks these views have in turn inspired are still in use; new textbooks continue to propagate them; the examining bodies who have gradually adopted them are still examining. As for the schoolboys' answers, I believe, like the Committee, that no part of the educational process 'should be without a purpose intelligible to everyone concerned' and that therefore the children's opinions are of the greatest importance. It is significant that among the 102 witnesses examined by the committee there were no children.

Local Midas

by L. Steni

IT was one of those strange little shops whose style is as draggled and aimless as the poor quarters they supply. The window was bare except for an aspidistra with yellow leaves, a few scattered toffee-apples, and a ham that had been whittled away until there was nothing left but the bone and a few shreds of gristly meat. On the dusty shelves of the interior were ranged bottles of acid-drops and peppermints, boxes piled with candles and albo car-

bon, and stale bread. The deal counter much worn and splintered, supported a brass weighing machine that, for glitter and size, appeared the most important article in the shop.

Every morning at six Mrs. Smith came down the stairs, scrubbed the floors, ranged the stock, and cooked her husband's breakfast. At half-past six Mr. Smith came down, and at seven he went out to work. The rest of the day she sat in the parlour, waiting for cus-

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tomers. When she heard them opening the door, she ran out swiftly, her bent, squat frame and curved arms giving her the appearance of a badger-like animal disturbed from its burrow. She was elderly; her hair fell in untidy wisps, greying at the tips, and her face was broad, with equine jaws. Her cheeks and forehead shone as if they had been varnished over their salmon pinkness, and there were no lines upon them, but her eyes had a glassy stare, a mournful apathy, that spelt defeat.

The customers dropped in from time to time. At twelve when the schools closed, there would be a handful of children coming in for toffee-apples and locust beans, and, as the afternoons wore on, the women of the neighbourhood gathered; strange, untidy looking individuals in drab clothes, with pale, embittered faces. They came, ostensibly, for a few candles, a pennyworth of jam, a hearthstone, and other small purchases, but usually they stayed to exchange their views on the latest illness or scandal in the street, maternity, funerals, and the favourite for the current races.

Mrs. Smith talked with them, a vague smile on her face, trying always to be agreeable. Although she was as interested as anyone else in the gossip of the quarter, she had many things on her mind, and it fatigued her to stand behind the counter for long. She was growing old. When finally they left the shop, she would be richer by a few pence. In the evenings she made up the books with her husband, counting up the coins that trickled in in this way.

In twenty years, by hard saving, they had amassed two hundred pounds. The thought that she had this money lying in the bank encouraged her, and spurred her on. If, when she woke to find herself feverish, or crippled with rheumatism, she dragged herself from her bed and hobbled about her work it was because of this idea, and the hope that at the end of the day she would have a few more shillings to deposit. Sometimes she wondered at life, though rarely; it was a great struggle, and there was little gained by it. Somehow, there was so much more to do for a woman in a shop than for a man! But she knew that presently she would be no longer able to work, and old age frightened her. She thought of the workhouse, and shivered.

Very often in the evenings, when she sat poring over her scratchy handwriting, she would look suddenly and anxiously at her husband. He did not seem to trouble about life as much as she did. Men didn't seem to take things as seriously as women, it seemed to her. Her husband puzzled her a little. He was somewhat younger than she was, and his fresh complexion and sharp eyes were deceiving. In his youth he had been a very handsome man, and had had many girls. Even now, the neighbours said that he was rather a gay spark; he went out working as an auxiliary postman, and she could not keep her eye on him. She tried to imagine him as an old and decrepit man, sitting at a workhouse bench with his cap over his head, eating bread and margarine. They would be separated

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then! The idea gave her an obscure, lingering pain. He had not been very good to her, but she loved him.

He was full of ideas. The journeys he took, tramping about the streets with letters, gave him the opportunity for hatching extraordinary schemes. Once he came home with one for the entire reorganization of the Post Office. He showed it to her, sketching it out on the back page of the cash book. It was very complicated, and she could not quite grasp it, but it seemed very clever. Several of the men he worked with had congratulated him upon it, he said, and had encouraged him to send it up to the Postmaster-General.

One evening, in the middle of supper, he said:

'Look here, old girl, what's the good of wearing yourself out with that blasted old shop?'

She sighed.

'Well, somebody has to do it, haven't they? What with the rent to pay and only twenty-seven and sixpence what you bring in, there isn't much to look forward to, is there?'

He smiled enigmatically. The light fell on his grey eyes, and his face was lit with an enthusiasm that seemed almost that of a young man.

'You won't have to work much longer!' he said, laughing softly.

'I wish I thought it was true!' she said. 'I really do! What's going to happen, then? Have you drawn a winner?'

'Oh, go on! I'm talking sense, I'm not joking! You mark my words,

there'll be things happening pretty soon that you'd be surprised at! We'll have enough money to buy a gold bed, if we wanted one!'

'Well, how are you going to do it?'

'Ah,' he said. 'That would be telling, wouldn't it?'

'What's the bright idea?' she asked, provoked by the mystery with which he surrounded himself.

'I can't tell you yet! I haven't got it worked out properly. It's a good notion, though!'

She stared at him. He seemed to have changed in some curious way. He had grown very serious, much graver than usual, and yet, below his gravity, there was a bubbling excitement, an enthusiasm that betrayed itself in the quivering solemnity of his face.

'I want a piece of paper!' he said, sharply.

She handed him one without a word. He began to fill it with figures, and with little notes, calculating, and whispering to himself. For a long time the room was in silence. He seemed so absorbed that she scarcely liked to interrupt him. Finally, she said:

'What do you want to keep it so dark for?'

'Well, I tell you, it isn't properly straightened out in my own mind yet, so how can I tell you anything?'

'I know! It's one of those old ideas that won't come to anything, like the Post Office one!'

He frowned.

'You don't understand!' he said.

'It's no use talking to you!'

For some time afterwards he went

L. Steni

about with a preoccupied air. When she approached him on the subject, he was very reticent, and, when pressed, flew into sudden rages. She wondered what she had said to offend him, and felt depressed. He was growing old, she thought; in fact, they both were. Possibly that was why his temper was so short, and his manner so changed. He might have stumbled upon some really good idea, and have grown offended because he thought that she was laughing at him! She tried to imagine herself rich. Certainly, it would be a load off her mind to know that she could stay in bed when she had bronchitis. Possibly she might have money enough then to take a short holiday, even to go down to Southampton to visit her married sister, whom she had not seen for fifteen years. The poor thing was in a bad way, from the letters she wrote, with a bed-ridden husband, and six children to look after! And, really, she was getting too old to be crawling about the shop! It was all right when one knew that there was no hope of anything better; somehow one was keyed up to it then! But, if he had really stumbled upon something . . . She was alone, and she laughed aloud. These things were scarcely real!

Some days later three cases of oranges arrived in the shop. Two van-men entered at midday, and deposited them in a corner. She looked at them in surprise.

'I didn't order these!' she said. The men looked at the floor and scratched their heads.

'They're paid for, missus!' said one of them. 'Directed to this address! Name of Smith, all right!'

It suddenly occurred to her. He must have bought them. Curious! she thought. He did not usually take such an interest in the shop.

'All right!' she said. 'I wasn't thinking! That'll be all right.'

One of the men smiled.

'Starting out in the greengrocery line?' he said. The oranges looked incongruous against the rest of the stock.

By nightfall she had sold a good few of the oranges. The schoolchildren and the gossips were eager for them, and she made a little more than usual. However, she was puzzled.

'It's not right to get so many boxes!' she said to her husband on his return. 'I've sold a good few out of them, but the rest'll spoil if we can't get rid of them quick!'

He looked at her for a few moments without speaking.

'You sold them, did you?' he said.

'Why, what's wrong?' she asked, surprised at his tone.

'You ought to have asked me before you did anything!' he answered in a peremptory way. Before she could answer him, he went into the parlour.

She followed him, but when she arrived in the room he was seated at the table, with an exercise book open.

'Close the door quietly!' he said. 'I can't be working properly with all this row going on!'

'All right! All right!' she said. 'No reason to make a fuss about it, is there?'

She had never known him so

A Mining Girlhood

by Roger Dattler

SHE touched the photograph diffidently, but with a certain tenderness – the photograph in which, with hair drawn from her forehead and much beribboned, she was wearing her frilly Scotch plaid dress for the first time. Her eyes were the same intent determined ones – a somewhat lighter grey than at present – her lips with the same rather impish compression. The rest of the family stood round about her. Her mother, whom the villagers always termed ‘Lady’ because of an invariable trimness of bearing, stood a little in the rear, a thin gold chain falling over her best brown satin dress, her hands laid over little Lucy’s shoulders for comfort. Two other girls (also resplendent in Scotch plaid), and their only brother, were ranged to a background of brick wall, with the lower angle of a window showing. The corners of the photograph were yellowing towards the centre (at some stage of removal it had been torn across and lightly gummed together), and though she seldom looked upon it now, always the same magic obtained. It was the Low End of the colliery; the credential of her childhood.

There were other buildings at

Low End, not quite so domestic as that set out upon the photograph – a signal box beside the railway embankment, the square stone stables, the little ambulance cabin, and the dark screens of the colliery itself, not a stone’s throw distant. But the cottage had always seemed to possess a singular isolation. Now, looking back a generation, it was the garden that did it, she decided, a green outwork encircling the whole house. And instantly the rich scent of the wallflowers invaded her nostrils; she saw the long coal-dusty path to the gate, and the stone stairs (forgotten until this moment) ranging the side of the cottage to a disused loft above the outhouse. . . .

Her father was a horseman to the Company, dark, be-whiskered, silent by nature, and so tall indeed that he was compelled to stoop every time he entered the doorway; her mother, brisk, petite, she remembered much more clearly when she thought of her hands, the slender white hands (with the single gold band) that at intervals of caring for the family would droop upon the keys of the piano in the parlour – though that was only seldom. . . .

Roger Dataller

From her earliest years she had never been able to conceive the world without a burning tip somewhere in the vicinity. Her youthful idea of heaven usually included that accretion. The tip at Low End loomed over the railway line, a film of smoke and vapour perpetually oozing from its many runnels and interstices. To her it was always an object of romantic excursion. With Fred, her brother, and Doris, her eldest sister, she would scramble across the metals to the grassy base where one collected a beautiful, splintery red ash with which to brighten the garden path. But the tip brought more than garden decoration. It was the repository of high adventure and unutterable terror. On one occasion following the nimble heels of Fred along the sulphurous slopes she had fallen through the crust, approaching shoulder deep. The thin ash swept warm and acrid about her, and she remembered the panic that filled her heart when she found herself sinking farther. But the others had managed to lug her out, and with fingers, pocket handkerchief, and spoken comfort, to make her a little more presentable. They assured her that mother need never be told. They would play outside a little longer for her benefit. The winds would blow about her clothing, and cleanse it of all impurity! When hours later, suspiciously hushed and chastened, they stole in to an evening meal, the children were not surprised to find their mother's nostrils instantly twitching. 'Whatever, child? . . .'

And it was all out. . . .

The colliery stables too, the children appropriated as part of their territory – dusty heaped-up bottles of straw in the loft – and the ground floor in particular, where two magnificent draught animals, Black Bess and Sandy were accommodated.

Bess, she remembered as the highly intelligent mare, in the habit of lifting a catch upon the half-door in order to enter Sandy's stall. . . . There was an impish evening when the children were left alone, and they decided to lift the catch of Bess's door in order to see what would happen. They had huddled together giggling as Bess ranged out, but the bared teeth, and the squeal of utter rage with which she had greeted Sandy, transfixed them with terror. Flickering mane! Flashing hoof! – the lurching and crashing of great bodies against the standing partition, all hurried the children through the garden, home, where they locked the door against their father's return, and cowered with fingers in ears to shut out the hideous echoes. When at last he did arrive, they watched trembling with apprehension as he donned his working coat and passed out to the nightly bedding of the horses. Half an hour later he returned, bent his great height to a seat, and sighed heavily. 'Sandy's gone an' broken a leg,' he announced. 'Bess must ha' lifted the latch again.'


The children maintained a guilty silence. . . .

The next day Sandy was shot, and from an upper window – much too ill to go to school – she peeped at the

A Mining Girlhood

awkward spaces of the new parlour, her father with a great saw working away at a chest of drawers that needed to be reduced a little in order to pass a certain corner in the stairs. They realized that they were leaving the tip, the cabins, the signal box, and the companionable rattle of the screens for

good. Intuitively they felt that they would seldom see them again, perhaps not at all; and in silence the children stood around as the blade bit deeper, deeper, and in this house of unquestionable neatness, saw the stream of sawdust drift unquestioned to the floor. . . .



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LETTERS TO NIGERIA—I

PALL MALL,
June 12th, 1934.

MY DEAR N

I suppose that some of the reverberations of the catch-as-catch-can fight at Olympia last week, between the Black Shirts and the Red Shirts, will have reached you over the wires long before you get this letter. A good many people seem to think that so sensational an exposure of the 'un-English' methods employed by the Black Shirts (male and female) to punish, as well as to eject the Communist interrupters (male and female) has 'dished Tom Mosley'.

I doubt however whether his prominence is great enough for him to be much hurt. He is still at the stage where the advertisement will outweigh the injury. Besides – well put it like this: The intention of the Communists to smash up the meeting was so well known in advance that no less than 1000 police, mounted and unmounted, were present outside the building. Mosley said he would not need them inside; his own men would look after that. Violent things happened before the meeting started. Red rushes prevented ticket-holders from getting in. The Black leader could not make his spot-lighted entrance until forty minutes after the advertised time.

A Red interrupter drops from the low gallery and seeks to mark a (perhaps) silly Blackshirt girl in the face with a razor blade. A male Blackshirt rushing up is met with 'un-English' knee-in-the-groin methods. The Red is ultimately overwhelmed and the Blackshirt stewards forgetful of the ancient ethics of English political controversy use their heavy boots on him *after* they have got him half-stunned outside the hall. The Rev. and most popular Dick Sheppard, late of St. Martin's, is scandalized – as you or I would be.

Well, there you have it! And what is to be said about it? If Mosley weren't the unfortunate sort of man who instinctively does or says the wrong thing whenever he has the chance, he might have made enormous capital out of the whole affair. He was given next day the magnificent and quite unprecedented opportunity of addressing the whole of the British Isles 'on the air' And what use did he make of it?

Instead of telling the truth and urging that organized and violent interruptions justified organized reprisals (which I think that they most certainly did) he accused all those who had witnessed and reported the violent methods of his black lambs of being 'deliberate liars'. Can you imagine anything so silly? But that is Mosley all over.

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Disarmament and Security question (like the American view about Debts and the British view about both), has not varied by an iota since the disastrous days of the invasion of the Ruhr. But for this immobility of opinion no one I think, is much to blame. It seems to me merely to reflect the inherent immobility of the hard underlying facts.

Senator Johnson expressed once more the other day his pious hope that the debtor nations would realize 'the sacredness of their obligations'. 'Sacred' has always seemed to me an odd word to use in connection with the absurdly inflated prices which America induced us in the stress of war to pay for her distinctly second-quality guns and explosives. Anyhow what they call 'sacred obligations' we think of as 'damned debts' and the difference of phrase is perhaps as good an illustration as you could find of the psychological facts of the dispute.

The debts *impasse* however is a minor question in comparison with the Franco-German *impasse*. It quite looked the other day as if a really dangerous situation might arise in connection with the Saar plebiscite. The Nazis seemed to be on the verge of taking the law into their own hands and replacing the League police with their own men, without waiting for the formality of the vote. If they had done so the French would almost certainly have retaliated and *poilus* would have entered the Saar valley as *sor-disants* champions of the League. In that situation what would have been Eng-

land's position under the Locarno Treaty? Which party would have been the 'aggressor'? The French forces in German territory or the German forces in League territory? A pretty problem, you will agree, illustrating the practical weakness of all agreements on the Locarno model.

But London in high June, concerns itself, as you may suppose, very little indeed with such dull and aged questions. For the Australian cricketers are here, as well as sundry foreign exponents of other British sports—golf, pugilism and lawn tennis. The weather is fine and dry but the newspapers are positively sodden with sport. By 'sodden' I seek to convey the sense of intoxication divorced from liveliness. Sports writers exploding their superlatives day after day irresistibly suggest perspiring waiters tugging at their corks to force a pop out of flat champagne.

The other day as it happened there occurred a memorable sporting feat. Let me explain that I really mean a feat likely to be remembered. A young American played 23 holes at Prestwick in 10 under fours (without a 2 on his card) and won our Amateur Championship by 14 up and 13 to play. But at that stage of the competition the common stock of superlatives had been exhausted. And so it was, I confess, with a slightly malicious curiosity that I turned next day to the column which is filled by that most delightful and best of all writers on current sport, the Golf Correspondent of *The Times*. I was charmed to find, however, that he had contrived

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diction worthy of the great occasion. 'It is certain,' he wrote, 'that such golf has never been seen in an Amateur Championship before, and I very much doubt whether such golf has ever been seen anywhere or ever will be seen again as long as the world shall stand.' He was forced, you will observe, to carry us back to Noah and forward to the next ice-age to get his effect, but I think he got it. A really noble effort!

Next however, to Bernard Darwin as a journalist I think I would place Mr. Lloyd George. The *Daily Telegraph* has been publishing extracts from the forthcoming third and fourth volumes of his War Memoirs.

I found the first instalment peculiarly interesting. It described the difficulties L.I.G. had to face in December, 1916, when he accepted the King's invitation to form a Ministry. The whole of the Labour Party (at that moment) were against his Premiership, as well as more than half the Liberal rank and file, and most of the Conservative leaders – with the decisively important exceptions of course of Carson, Bonar and above all, Balfour. We all know how easily in the event L.I.G. overcame these difficulties and formed a Coalition which was certainly more coherent and powerful than its predecessor. But the interesting point is this: How was it that L.I.G. holding so comparatively weak a personal position ever displaced Asquith at all?

You will remember how vehement an Asquithian I was at that time. I

thought the displacement of Asquith meant the end of effective national unity. But deep as was my dismay, my puzzlement was even deeper. For I knew, as of course everyone who was at all in touch with Whitehall and Westminster knew, that L.I.G.'s position was exactly as he now describes it. Neither the Cabinet nor the Commons wanted him at No 10; and as for the nation, I was then, and am still, convinced that on an appeal to the country L.I.G. would have found no more support in the autumn of 1916 than he found in the autumn of 1931.

In effect Asquith had only to lift his finger to keep his place. But he did not lift it. I remember feeling it at the time to be almost an outrage that he did not allow the House of Commons even an opportunity of expressing its opinion as to whether he should go or not. There was no shadow of a doubt of course about what its verdict would have been. Balfour's support of L.I.G. was given only, as it were, after the event; Bonar would not openly have deserted his chief; and Carson's 'cave' was a very small one.

So L.I.G. had not a chance in a thousand against the Prime Minister on a 'show-down'. Why then did Asquith not hold on? Until the public is given the answer to that question – and naturally the answer will have to come from an Asquithian – it will not understand how it was that L.I.G., certainly to his own astonishment and perhaps with a slight momentary dismay, found himself in Downing Street before Christmas came in that dreadful

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such beautiful and lively choric speaking has been heard on the English stage.

The theme of the pageant was church-building; scenes were taken from all ages, showing obstacles to the church being overcome. The choric interventions criticized the character of the world to-day. As propaganda they were defective, in that they did not 'get across' the idea that, if more churches were built, the people would be altered for the better, and would desert the by-pass and asphalt roads, 'the lobelias and tennis flannels', which were referred to in tones of signal horror. In fact, the pessimism of the chorus often contradicted the optimism of the scenario. This may have been intentional – to offer a sense of good and evil markedly co-existing and humanity for ever in an unresolved struggle between them; that is to say, Mr. Eliot remained the artist even when disguised as the propagandist.

The great snake lies ever half awake, at the
bottom of the pit of the world, curled
In folds of himself until he awakens in
hunger and moving his head to right
and to left prepares for his hour to devour
But the Mystery of Iniquity is a pit too
deep for mortal eyes to plumb. Come
Ye out from among those who prize the
serpent's golden eyes,
he worshippers, self-given sacrifice of the
snake. Take
Your way and be separate

These choruses are notable, brilliant in freedom, music and dramatic quality.

The fusion of poetry and drama is a

process lately attempted by leading poets of our day. I hear that Mr. Yeats is now – in the full mastery of his later manner – making a fresh attempt at a drama. And at the time when I write I see the publication by M. Valéry of *Sémiramis* which he calls a melodrama. It is a mixture of mime, music and poetry. He says in an interview that he thought of the problem about 1894, and adds: '*Or le problème revenait en grande partie à trouver un genre d'action scénique qui fût à l'imitation directe de la vie ce que le langage chanté est au langage parlé ordinaire.*' *Sémiramis* is a picture of exotic sadism, (marred by a curious sentimentality about voluptuousness), reaching a height which is 'incredible'.

Incroyable – et, par le, divine

The season of school speech days has begun. One head master reported 'a year of good progress in all directions'. Everyone was delighted.

In Hyde Park an ancient man with white beard often gives crumbs to sparrows. The other day I saw two well-dressed small girls rush up; and he gave them crumbs for the birds. There was a press photographer near by. The small girls at once turned towards the photographer, smiling eagerly, holding up the crumbs but heedless of the birds. They stood in the one position, waiting.

Evidently, at the age of six, one is alive to the importance of publicity.

Reviews

CURZON: THE LAST PHASE

CURZON: THE LAST PHASE. By HAROLD NICOLSON. Constable, 18s.

No one who has seen any of Mr. Harold Nicolson's previous sketches of the major light in the firmament of his own all too brief diplomatic career will need to be assured that this more serious and sustained study of the late Lord Curzon possesses every possible merit. To be trite, but at the same time precise, Nicolson makes his Curzon live again for us. It is a cinematographic rather than a photographic portrait – or better still a 'talkie', for Curzon's self indubitably stalks and talks on the pages of this brilliant monograph.

One cannot help wondering what Lord Curzon himself would have thought of it if he were still alive. He would have laughed, of course, as was his wont; but would he in his heart have resented at all the air of sustained kindness which pervades Mr. Nicolson's narrative? Probably he would not, for essentially his was a very simple not a subtle soul and he very much appreciated even small acts of kindness. His vanity moreover was not at all complicated or prone to suspicion. It was as simple as his simple love of pomp. One imagines that any competent psycho-analyst

would have been obliged, however regretfully, to give Curzon a clean bill of mental health. He asserted his superiority as a matter of principle and habit – and partly no doubt at times out of a sheer joy in the exercise of the very great intellectual powers which he certainly possessed.

Curzon does not seem ever to have over-rated or under-rated those powers. He knew that Lloyd George was his superior in many ways just as clearly as he knew that Poincaré, if less skilled than himself in the rapier play of diplomacy, was at least worthy of his steel, that Bonar Law was his inferior all round and that by every criterion that he could understand Baldwin was not worth so much as five minutes of his valuable attention.

This knowledge may have added something to the first shock of his tremendous disappointment when he was stopped on his very way, as it were, to Buckingham Palace by an official message to the effect that the King had been obliged to change his mind and send for Baldwin instead of for himself.

'Not even a public figure,' sobbed Curzon. 'A man of no experience. And of the utmost insignificance.' He bowed his face in his hands. 'The utmost insignificance,' he repeated.

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But afterwards, one may reasonably suppose, the ache of the wound must have been appreciably relieved by the thought that such a choice could not imaginably have been made on grounds of personal merit and therefore implied no reflection upon the value of the great services which he, Curzon, had rendered to his country and to the Empire.

At all events he lost no time in proving that his magnificence was not merely skin deep. He consented to remain for a month or so at the Foreign Office lest his resignation should lower the political stock of the new Premier, and four days later 'it fell to Lord Curzon to propose that Mr. Baldwin be elected leader of the Conservative Party. He did so with eloquence and calm. He then returned to his battle with M. Poincaré.' Mr. Nicolson's account of this episode makes one almost wish that Mr. Baldwin had felt able at that moment to advise the King to advance Lord Curzon to that coveted ducal rank which he would so obviously have adorned.

But interesting as Mr. Nicolson's personal impressions always are, much the most important feature of this book is his professional tribute to Lord Curzon as a diplomatist. He suggests that in the sixteen months of power which Curzon enjoyed after Lloyd-George's resignation, he managed, by ignoring the 'positively glacial feet' of Bonar Law and the congenital 'insignificance' of Baldwin, to 're-establish British prestige in three continents'.

Poincaré he defeated with con-

summate ease whenever he crossed swords with him, and that stiff little French lawyer, since he fought under the same rules would have been obliged to acknowledge defeat (about Reparations and the Ruhr invasion) much more definitely than he actually did if Baldwin, unconsciously (and Sir William Tyrrell very consciously – though of course the junior Mr. Nicolson refrains from mentioning the name of so high a Foreign Office official) had not interfered in time to save the *amour-propre* of the Quai d'Orsay, and set a limit to Curzon's increasing moral authority in Europe.

But about Turkey Lord Curzon succeeded in exercising an almost completely free hand. By keeping the Cabinet (though not of course the Foreign Office) very largely in the dark he found full scope at Lausanne for what Mr. Nicolson (who was born and bred in the service) calls 'his unequalled diplomatic skill'. Curzon entered the Lausanne Conference with the dice very heavily loaded against him. In effect he had to oppose the French, the Italians and the Russians, as well as the Turks flushed with their Ghazi's recent and resounding victory over Mr. Lloyd George's Greek friends. Poincaré was a snake in the grass seeking primarily to discredit British diplomacy for ends of his own quite alien to the purposes of the Lausanne Conference. Mussolini's representative was out for simple blackmail (and was crushed in a tearful private interview which lasted for only a few minutes). Chicherin, like all Bolsheviks, was possessed of the

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single-minded idea of destroying the British Empire.

Curzon also had one main idea, and one purpose. He sought to re-establish British prestige throughout the East. 'Prestige' was a subject which he understood from foundation to pinnacle more thoroughly perhaps than any other man in the world. Unlike Poincaré (who had however unwillingly to follow him) he recognized at once the advantage of conceding everything to the self-conscious dignity, but as little as possible to the concrete claims, of the then inexperienced Mussolini. In the final upshot his success was complete. He won not only the major battle but all the minor engagements as well.

How Curzon detached first this and then that of his several adversaries and outmanœuvred and pulverized them one by one in the sight of all beholders becomes in Mr. Nicolson's intimate narrative an almost epic tale of the triumph of superior diplomatic technique, as employed by a master who fought always on the side of the angels — those ancient guardian angels of England.

Here Mr. Nicolson, to his honour, is not above using superlatives in expressing his full appreciation of Curzon's immense professional virtuosity. Curzon induced Ismet Pasha to make a full statement of the Turkish case regarding Mosul. When he had finished Curzon in quiet tones

embarked upon what was perhaps the most brilliant, the most erudite, the most lucid exposition which even he had ever achieved. With

unemphatic logic he demolished one by one the arguments which Ismet Pasha had advanced. The whole resources of his unequalled knowledge, the whole value of his unexampled experience, the vigour of his superb memory, his supreme mastery of lucid diction, the perfect symmetry of his every phrase, combined with the visual effect of his Olympian presence, rendered his performance one which none of those present (and they were men who had been accustomed to oratory in every form) had ever seen equalled or would ever see surpassed.

In short, Curzon played everyone else off the stage, making his own country appear once more throughout the bazaars of the East, as the supreme arbiter of current history. He had done his job as no one else could have done it.

No sufficient space remains here to examine Mr. Nicolson's doctrine concerning the Old Diplomacy and the New. One must be content to say that his constructive suggestions seem to be as fully informed by solid common sense added to professional knowledge, as is all his destructive criticism. His broad conclusion is that while the objects of national policy must be decided and defined on the hustings, the means of their achievement must be left to the professional expert. Such first-hand knowledge as the present reviewer has garnered here and there leads him to accept without hesitation almost every word that Mr. Nicolson has written.

Reviews

SHAVIAN RETROSPECT

SHORT STORIES, SCRAPS AND SHAVINGS.

By GEORGE BERNARD SHAW. Constable. 7s. 6d.

AT first, a kaleidoscope provokes astonishment and exclamations, especially among children and savages. But the eyes soon tire and wonder gives way to indifference. In the changing of coloured shapes there is not enough to hold attention for long. Colour and shape, liberated from the restrictions imposed by nature on objects, lose interest while gaining freedom. Similarly the mind, severed from its deep roots in conscious and unconscious feeling, may gain brilliance, wider range and startling agility: but on the exchange it loses interest, humanity, and truth.

Mr. Shaw is a rationalist, who assumes that man can and ought to be rational. The basis of his humour lies in pointing out that man is not rational. To laugh at man because he is not rational is to laugh at a camel because it is not a crocodile. At least since Aristotle, European man has found it hard not to believe that his reason is disinterested, supreme, and the moulder of his conduct. Disbelief in God makes it harder still. Reason is the only absolute left. Mr. Shaw's popularity rests on his irrational faith in reason.

There is little difference between this book of short stories and any other Shavian volume. It is Shaw, exhibiting his personality. These shavings, chips off the old block industriously swept up from the workshop floor, exhibit the usual characteristics,

There is no single live character between the covers, except that of the manipulator Shaw has in his whole career produced no character who stands as a person and a type, like Hamlet, Bazarov, Quixote or Hedda Gabler. People with breath and blood and body-odour are not his province. There are no women in labour or men out of it; no sudden happiness nor delayed disaster; no mental conflict. He can recognize the greatness of Ibsen's humanity, yet remains himself an inhuman humanitarian, abstracting the quick chaos of life to the order of problems, political, educational and economic, problems of eugenics, science and unreason. Here lies his failure as artist. He cannot move, because he is not moved himself. 'Cannonfodder' is the nearest he comes to humanity; and in that he is merely descriptive. Most of his stories are essays in fancy dress. 'Don Giovanni Explains', 'The Theatre of the Future', 'A Dressing Room Secret', and 'Death of an Old Revolutionary Hero' are of this type. In one respect, these stories are interesting. The real world having been rejected for a world of ideas, Shaw is left with no actual playground for his imagination and so is driven to supernatural fantasy, to ghosts, miracles and talking busts, even to celestial high jinks – an irrational but intelligible playbox for a rationalist.

In 'The Emperor and the Little Girl', he attempts to appeal to emotion, not intellect; and the result is not feeling but gooseflesh. Faced with war, *the* war not war in abstract, he writes – 'Every-

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one had to hide in the trenches. If they showed their heads for a moment bang! they were shot. There were curtains hung to prevent you from crossing fields, only these curtains were not like window curtains: they were really shells, showers of bombshells bursting and digging great holes in the ground, and blowing people and cattle and trees all to bits; so they were called fire curtains. At night there were no fire curtains; and the soldiers who were up all night watching to shoot you, could not see you so easily.' This description, written in 1916, does little credit to his imagination, but worse is to come. The German Emperor, walking in No Man's Land in order to prove to himself that he has the courage to do so, meets a small Belgian girl, who visits soldiers in shell holes and gives them water. They talk about the cares of being an Emperor until the little girl is blown to bits. Far from being done with her, the Kaiser has to continue the conversation with her disembodied spirit, which perches in a tree. Before she leaves this world, the girl flies down to kiss the Emperor, who 'turned up his face to where the voice came from when she said she would kiss him; and then he saw flying down from the tree the most lovely little rosy body of a tiny girl with wings, perfectly clean and not minding a bit that it had nothing on; and it put its arms round his neck and kissed him before it flew away.' Mind, split from feeling, produces sentimentality of this type, because it writes not from experience but inference.

Beliefs spring not from reason but

graded experience: to which reason adds an apparent coherence, supplies in fact a sort of mental stucco, which as often as not hides jerry-building. Because Mr. Shaw assumes that those parts of the house which he can't see are composed of the stucco which he can, because in fact he ignores the architecture of personality, his plans for society are valueless. When he argues about beliefs, his arguments cut no more ice than a trick skater. It is unfortunately not impossible to rationalize the irrational; but it is ridiculous. The Black Girl is ridiculous in her search for God. She provokes laughter, but not thought. Ideas are the clothes of the psyche; always a covering, they change in shape and material with fashion. Beliefs however are organic, and change only with an alteration of the organism. Dress Reform cannot deeply change anatomy, nor ideas the structure of the psyche. yet that is what Mr. Shaw tries to do.

In one of his letters, Tchekov refers to Shaw as 'the English humorist'. He is *the* English humorist of to-day. But the claim of Shaw the philosopher, of Shaw the saviour of society, that his followers make and he does little to contradict, is as if we should find four modern evangelists in the Marx Brothers.

FIRBANK

THE ARTIFICIAL PRINCESS. By RONALD FIRBANK. Duckworth. 6s.

AMONG the Dandies of literature, Firbank has a secure if inconspicuous

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place. He is not spectacular, he talks in the mildest of tones, and from some angles this figure, gloved, scented and rehearsing its extravagant and meticulous speech, is inevitably lost among bulkier neighbours. He does not carry across a crowded room; we are dominated by other gestures, more showy and emphatic. Yet, after others have gone, Firbank will be seen in a corner still talking and giving the conversation a second wind; he resumes with the quiet staying-power of a guest who may be relied on to make the party a success after it has officially broken up; the late hour, the smaller audience encourage a verve and a *freshness* which delight on such occasions.

Put him beside Wilde and he seems a slight figure. There is much in Wilde however (apart from the change of fashion) which spoils his pose as a Dandy; I do not mean merely the increasing jowl; the squalor and tragedy of his life intrude. The *Ballad of Reading Gaol* and *De Profundis* are good of their (rather mixed) kind; but they are not the sort of works which support the picture Wilde had given of himself. They give us something 'deeper' if you like, but we cannot now reread his flippancies with the same detachment; his own detachment – the important quality of the Dandy – is marred by the confession.

With Firbank there are no intrusions of this sort; he is the poet of an artificial world into which a private tragedy cannot break. It is also a world in which to some extent he managed to live himself. His conversa-

tion, his travels round Europe when he would get up in time for the ballet and then spend the night in a round of cafés, his lavish expenditure and fits of remorse which brought him back to the arms of the Church – those fantastic incidents we have learned from books of memoirs – do not affect our attitude towards what he wrote.

We might have guessed, even if we had not been told, that he spent most of his evenings at the Diaghilev Ballet. It was the fashion, and it was a genuinely delightful experience. His tales reflect in prose the movements on the stage, the music, the lights, the buzzing conversation during the interval. The well-known passage in *Prancing Nigger* where the boy passing the Customs is asked if he has anything to declare and answers 'Butterflies . . .' is pure ballet, transformed in airy, shimmering sentences. Firbank is one of the very few writers on whom it would be impossible to improve. We cannot imagine another and greater Firbank rising in the future.

Such perfection has of course its limitations; but to insist on Firbank's limitations, as some of his more exasperated critics have done, is silly and quite useless as criticism. His 'naughtiness', too, is so airy that many readers are apparently annoyed because it does not make a better target for criticism: Lamb's defence of Restoration Comedy might really apply, if the moralist insists, to Firbank's stories.

The discovery of a new story *The Artificial Princess*, written in 1915 immediately before *Vainglory*, and now pub-

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lished by Duckworth in their Collected Edition, will delight all admirers of his talent. Why it has never been published before is a mystery which the Introduction to the present volume hardly solves. Firbank apparently put it away before going on a round of his travels, and afterwards refrained from publishing because he had drawn on several passages for later books. One or two sentences which have already appeared in *Vainglory* are quoted in the introduction; but this doubling seems to amount to very little. *The Artificial Princess* is certainly one of the most exquisite of Firbank's tales; and the whisperings of the Court, the coloured buses in the square, the inn with its shady garden and its pair of lovers tirelessly embracing in stone seem to

reflect the characters as they move from sun to shade in a delighted mid-summer trance. Foreground and background are one: how effortlessly Firbank has solved that difficulty of the novelist! His personages are the fantastic creatures of dream, yet we recognize their gestures, their frounces and little inane confidences; they live in a stage town, with a limelit country surrounding it, and yet it may be some Mediterranean place which in our travels we have happened to miss. Firbank is the most artificial of fantasists and the most natural in artificiality; and he is easiest to read. Confronted with so lucky a gift we may well forget his place in literature in the delight of the moment.

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Reviews

A STORY ANTHOLOGY

A STORY ANTHOLOGY, 1931-1933. Edited by WHIT BURNETT AND MARTHA FOLEY. Cape. 7s. 6d.

IT is always gratifying to record the success of an adventurous experiment. Three years ago two American short story writers who were living in Vienna had the courage to launch a magazine in that city devoted solely to the serious short story. They belonged to no literary group, had no influential friends, and relied on a typewriter to print their magazine. It was their design to publish only such short stories, for the most part American, as had been denied publication by editorial prejudice. It was their wish to find a small public for such stories: it was their hope to discover new writers of talent. Their wish and their hope alike have been gratified. They have discovered a new generation of writers: they have developed a considerable public for the writers whom they have found.

The magazine's literary achievement is adequately reflected in the present collection of stories, drawn from its first two years. *A Story Anthology* gives both the American and the English short story a new orientation. If it presents itself chiefly to the American reader as a mirror of the life which he knows, a mirror which no longer obscures reality by sentimentality or meretricious technique, it must present itself to the English reader as a revelation of new artistic possibilities, and as a fertilizing influence

of considerable value. Is it possible to define the quality of this? What common characteristics are found in these thirty-three stories by thirty-three American and English writers?

First of all, it is remarkable that they show little or no trace of a conventional mould. They are not stories written by men and women who have studied the craft of other story-writers. They are amateur, not professional stories. Their writers have not studied the technique of Kipling or O. Henry, of Hawthorne or Katherine Mansfield. They are much too innocent for that. They have not travelled to far places for local colour nor have they recorded the quaint sayings and gestures of 'local characters' with friendly condescension. They have not studied psychological case-books nor have they psycho-analysed themselves. Again we may say that they are much too innocent for that, — too innocent and too preoccupied with the homeliness of life. They have found and appreciated the tragicomedy of life at home or next door and rendered their impressions of it with modesty and self-effacement. They are for the most part free of life and are able to take their freedom for granted. That marks a forward step in post-war self-realization.

It may be objected that such innocence is only possible in an unstratified society. There is truth in the objection, but not valuable truth. It would be difficult to conceive of these stories being produced in a closed and strictly ordered small society such

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as that of England in the eighteenth century, but ours is a continually changing and expanding society, and these stories are written by pioneers conscious of the new frontiers which life is opening in these years of rapid transition. It is natural that Americans should have become conscious of the new frontiers before the old world awakened to them. They have a frontier culture to guide and sustain them. They are less fearful of making little mistakes. They do not need to be so jealously sure of good form. They are less sheltered and repressed and consequently more adventurous. Perhaps they have more intuitive sympathy with their neighbours.

It is this sense of freedom and self-reliance, this intuitive sympathy with

the inarticulate humble man, which should be a valuable influence on the English short story. In this country the serious short story has been unduly coddled. It is beautifully written and tends, with the younger English writers, to become a surrogate for frustrated lyric poetry. *A Story Anthology* by its example might well sweep away this anaemic and unhealthy attitude. It is high time that the young English story writer braced himself to the salt and bitter reality of life and to its salt and vulgar humour. Life is not in bad taste.

There are failures and imperfect successes in this collection, but each story has a glimpse of a new frontier. Contemporary American culture is largely moulded by a world of machines,

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and it is not surprising that behaviourism, which is the psychology of machines, frequently plays an implicit, if silent, part in these stories. The important thing to remember is that if many of these writers accept behaviourism, it is because they wish to be free of the machine, and that not one of these stories has a mechanical structure. Life may be dusty, and the machines may be deafening. You can see the dust and you can hear the roar, but you are left listening to the still small voice of the American finding his soul in his own land and interpreting it in his own language to his fellows, and therefore to us.

UNIT ONE

UNIT ONE. Edited by HERBERT READ.
Cassell, 10s. 6d.

THE Unit is perhaps too easily considered as a figure of fun: the claims of the artists who compose this group are too easily dismissed on account of their obvious contradictions. But before saying anything in their favour it will be necessary to mention the chief of these contradictions. The book is a collection of statements by seven painters, two sculptors and two architects. Each statement is preceded by a photograph of the artist and of his hands, and followed by a photograph of his studio and four photographs of his work.

With a title so emphatic, it might be supposed that there existed some

obvious bond between the work of these artists. Such is not the case. In the letter to *The Times* announcing the formation of the group, Paul Nash stated that there is nothing naive about *Unit One*, and nothing vague either or so he implies. For Mr. Nash is contrasting his group with that of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, which he judges to have been 'naive and rather vague' in their intentions. Later, however, Mr. Nash admits that there is no obvious link between the artists of *Unit One*. 'It cannot be said,' he writes, 'that all these artists practice "abstract" art, or that they are all interested in an architectonic quality principally, although this, perhaps, is a common pursuit with the majority. More exactly, *Unit One* may be said to stand for the expression of a truly contemporary spirit, for that thing which is recognized as peculiarly of *to-day* in painting, sculpture and architecture.' Try as he does, Mr. Read cannot produce a definition more particular than this cry 'peculiarly of to-day'. And yet the artists insist that they face the world with an almost Fascist air of deliberate, even insolent, assurance.

We find a similar degree of (apparent) basic contradiction in most of the work of these artists, here reproduced, and in their statements. In accordance with his aesthetic of 'utterness' (like many of his associates he always refers to 'work', never to 'my work'), Henry Moore is primarily concerned with 'direct' carving rather than with modelling. Yet in the same breath he avows,

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and his works display, an intentness upon what might be described as purely plastic or modelling values, upon forms no less asymmetrical, no less preconceived, than those of the Baroque, forms 'dynamic', organic, 'powerful', and full of rhythm.

Some of the painters seem entirely at sea. Upon one and the same page we read the following by Henry Bigge. 'Under all the apparent diversity of *modern* painting there is a curious homogeneity of sentiment and intention. By different methods and along different paths the painters are searching for the same thing.' And: 'In such an epoch as this it would be foolish – especially for an artist – to dogmatize as to what form of art is most appropriate and in what direction its vitality should be directed.' The implication that the artist finds a situation in contemporary life and should or should not do something about it, is a most unaesthetic one, to say the least. But then the contemporary situation is unaesthetic. the cart is nearly always in front of the horse: whence so much talk about art and so little performance. And it is not unnatural that the modern artist should often insist that the cart looks better in front of the horse, the unconscious in front of the conscious, the child in front of the man, and so on. The elements of 'lostness' and of discovery are indissolubly mixed and are identified. Who is to say which precedes which, or which controls? Painters, like the rest of us, are impelled *from behind* to something new. We would prefer to see something *in front*

of us, something comprehensive. But we must accept the situation as it is. The best of these artists see a little in front of them; which is more than the rest of us do.

In the statements of Wadsworth and John Bigge especially, we find sentences expressing an emphatic belief in visual abstraction. The forms of an abstract picture admittedly possess some relation, however indirect, to Nature. But they also have a most definite relation, less to the painter's breadth of imagination, than to his fixed ideas and compulsions. Nothing is more boring and more subjective than a fixed idea rejoicing in an unvaried outlet, an outlet innocent of trimmings and superficial decorations. No manner of art becomes more easily subjective than abstract painting. The power of projection must be very great to achieve triumphs in this mode. And it is the quality and degree of the projection of fixed ideas displayed in various art periods, of which the *Unit One* artists, one and all, have so little sense. Their understanding is concentrated upon Form. Any art that does not satisfy their feeling for Form is by them dismissed. The quality of aesthetic projection, as it may be studied in art history, has no interest for them; and since they themselves with only one exception are lacking in the power of projection, so long as this side of art has no conscious interest for them, they will not understand the uttermost about visual art. Not until Picasso's comprehensive power of projection, apart from what

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he projects, is studied and understood, will abstraction cease to pass easily into surrealism, and surrealism into abstraction, or will the basic approach of contemporary painting be defined. And this study of Picasso should entail a study of the European mode of projection in general.

So much in criticism. Many of these same defects earn complete absolution. For they mirror those issues of contemporary life that are profound. It is unnecessary to detail our uncertainty to-day, an uncertainty conjoined not only with a sense of illimitable power, but also with simplified or 'debunked' aims, in which the awareness that we are presented with a clean sheet, finds expression. Only while one believes, therefore, that the artist should lead the way as well as hold

the mirror to a present state, does there exist any relevance in criticizing so contemporary a manifestation as *Unit One*.

It is noteworthy that the statements of the two architects, Wells Coates and Colin Lucas, show less vagueness and less corresponding arrogance than do the other statements. Contemporary architecture, in close touch with changed and changing social conditions, seems to be the modern art most sure of its ground.

The most positive effect that the present reviewer gained in the perusal of this book was from Plate 47, illustrating *Two Circles* by Ben Nicholson. This artist is head and shoulders above his associates; no other painter in England merits comparison with him. There remains no room to describe his

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work or even to describe these circles. Suffice it to say that this abstract picture is a perfect projection into spatial terms. As an illumination of space, of position, of colour, it is unique in present-day art. When one man is thus in advance of his fellows, it would seem best if he were regarded as leader. As far as the painters are concerned, the old-fashioned situation of a master and his school would seem preferable to the rather tiresome equality and independence on which *Unit One* insists.

MORAL ARCHAEOLOGY

THE DAWN OF CONSCIENCE. By PROF.
JAMES H. BREASTED. Scribners.
12s. 6d

PROFESSOR BREASTED'S *Dawn of Conscience* is a valiant attempt to extract from Egyptian studies some hint of how early society evolved moral concepts. With the general lines of the work we are on fairly non-controversial ground. It is a recapitulation of what should to-day be a commonplace – that the peculiar conditions of the Nile valley, somewhere after the tenth millennium B.C., created the first settled human life, based on agriculture; and Professor Breasted shows the evolution of religious ideas in that initial civilization. Speculators with no more foundation than their own anarchistic thought, would tell us that, by some kind of abstract law, the concept of a single divinity is the work of a nomadic

people. (A recent monumental example is Dr. Josef Kafstein's *History of the Jews*.) And in the absence of generally recognizable external reasons for this thesis, we are driven to look for dominating personal motives. Thus Kafstein's desire to justify Zionism leads him to make an abstract theory of the nomadic nature of monotheism. Suspicion of all such fantasies leads to this question: even if we grant that early agriculture and the beginnings of civilized life were the result of the natural start given by the regular flooding by the Nile of a narrow valley in a gradually desiccating complex of land, how far is Professor Breasted building up on his own prejudices and habits, when out of that starting of civilization he evolves the first systematized moral concepts? In other words, since Egypt is his lifework, is he prone to exaggerate the importance of Egyptian beginnings?

In answering this question in 1934, there is surely no need to defend the view that a great part of known religious beliefs grew from Egyptian conditions. Somewhere in the dawn of history the Nile Valley men began to utilize the annual floods for growing grain. The effective extension of that practice to a larger number of people than the inventors, necessitated organization. Some early organizer who established the first rules by which men could count on success with a reasonable degree of probability became a deified ruler. Nor should it surprise us that in this early stage of human consciousness this ruler was identified

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with the vegetational process, and was himself believed to rise periodically from the dead and save mankind.

In fact, in broad outlines we see that Professor Breasted's lifelong intimacy with the Egyptian past and present is an advantage to him and to us. His prodigious knowledge produces fruit and there is no more wonderful example of this than the revealing searchlight he throws on the wild speculators' playground of the origins of monotheism. In spite of his closeness to the matter examined, he is able to have perspective, and when he considers the change in Egypt in the period of Empire from the conception of local gods (even the Sun-god, Ra, had been

a purely Egyptian god) to the conception of a universal god, he produces this illuminating passage 'It was universalism expressed in terms of imperial power which first caught the imagination of the thinking men of the Empire, and disclosed to them the universal sweep of the Sun-god's dominion as a physical fact. Monotheism was but imperialism in religion.' Here we are on good solid ground.

But these are matters of general import. We must go further. This passage shows that Professor Breasted treats of religion as a social manifestation. Now when we turn to the main purpose of the book ('the source of our moral heritage in the ancient world')

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we are on more treacherous ground, because we are inquiring into the individual aspect of religion. This raises the delicate problem of the adequacy of the given belief to the social facts of any individual. Professor Breasted constantly refers to 'thinking men'; and his attitude seems to be that the nation as a homogeneous whole throws out 'thinking men' who crystallize the findings of the whole in actual life. He goes into the forest, and the deeper in he goes the less firewood he sees; and when he retires to view from a distance he is overawed by the big timber.

A standard test for any Egyptian historian is his treatment of the Eleventh Dynasty, which separates the ancient world, in which only the Pharaohs and their sycophants had 'eternal life' (through costly pyramids and other tombs), from the later period when every Tom, Dick and Harry, labelled after death as a 'son of Osiris' (though without any pyramid) could be confident of transport over the Egyptian prototype of Jordan into the life hereafter. Professor Breasted takes texts of this period (which Moret openly calls an age of revolution and 'democratization'), and extracts from them, alas, only the unnutritious fare of a disillusionment of 'thinking men' in trust in material means of winning eternal life. It was surely much more like the revolt, if not of a vaguely defined 'people' as glimpsed by Moret, at least of the better-situated peasantry (the middle class), against the ancient way of giving all the plums

to the aristocracy; and the religious 'democratization' is only a result of the social change.

Professor Breasted quotes the poems known as the 'Dialogue of a Misanthrope with his Own Soul', a wail of a dying order which will remind every reader of the poems of Mr. Eliot, as exemplary of the disillusionment in material things which is to produce spiritual values. But when we read

'To whom do I speak to-day?
He of the peaceful face is wretched,
The good is disregarded in every
place'

we must not imagine, as Professor Breasted wishes us to, that an abstract or absolute peacefulness or goodness is involved. When the Pyramid text gives us the moral foundations of the early age, and says that 'life is given to the peaceful and death to the criminal', this means no more than that those who do not support the existing order are seditious and will be treated as felons. The Misanthrope, like most other misanthropes, is not disturbed by the failure of material values as such, but by the growing refusal of those who do not enjoy the existing material values, to approve of the system which supports them. Thus we may say that while Professor Breasted confines himself to national matters (accepting as *nation* the ruling interests) he is profound and illuminating, but when he proceeds to consider the growth of moral values his conception of what is the nation, and what 'thinking men' represent, leads him into grave error.

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Edited by Hamish Miles

Vol. x. No. 56

Monthly

August 1934

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A DISTINGUISHED and cynical observer of current events remarked the other day that at no previous moment in human history had there been so much activity and so little achievement in the literary world. We do not propose on this occasion to discuss the implications of his remark, beyond suggesting that his verdict on what he saw was quite probably correct, but that equally probably his opinion was arrived at through not knowing where to look to see something else. We suspect that there are quite a number of other people, bemused by the loud cries of popular critics and over-enthusiastic publishers, who would endorse his opinion; we suspect further that they are victims of the same error. It is, in brief, beyond the ability of anyone who does not devote his whole time to the task to know precisely what *is* happening in the literary world to-day, and only to one person in a thousand is given the requisite time to do so. For the other nine hundred and ninety-nine (or rather for those of them who are not content indefinitely to share the distinguished cynic's bewilderment) there is the alternative of relying on the literary pages of *THE SPECTATOR*. In the adjoining column is given a list of writers who have contributed to our literary pages during the first half of 1934. We believe that their names alone will be enough to substantiate our contention that our literary pages have an authority and distinction which are to-day unrivalled among English periodicals.

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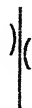
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NEWS SUMMARY — BOOKS — COUNTRY LIFE — THEATRE — FINANCE

Life and Letters

August 1934



The Seed Cake and the Love Lady

by Graham Greene

I

THE history of fiction, from the time of Richard Greene to the time of George Moore, records innumerable evasions of contemporary life, attempts to reach a state of exalted fancy by combining the evocative powers of romantic poetry with the excitements of fabulous narrative. But the main tradition of fiction has never been affected. Landor and Pater affected it no more than Greene or Lyly. There have been no revolutions in the history of the novel, only technical discoveries with the object of making more perfect the illusion of life. 'Catching the very note and trick,' Henry James wrote, 'the strange irregular rhythm of life, that is the attempt whose strenuous force keeps Fiction upon her feet.'

This is the sentence I would oppose to the point of view developed by Mr. Charles Morgan last month in *Life and Letters*. It is a golden sentence for all who try to follow some middle course between, let me say, the extreme aestheticism of Landor and the extreme social preoccupations of the latest Russian novelist. For James does not claim that only in so far as it catches the rhythm of life is fiction valuable. His claim is more moderate, it is a technical claim. The consciousness of one's time is the shaping and restraining element in creation. It is like the pressure of the air upon the body.

I am not competent to swap universals with Mr. Morgan. I have no clear conception of what is meant by

The Seed Cake and the Love Lady

Truth and Beauty, and his essay does little to enlighten me. In reply to those who demand a degree of social consciousness in the novel, he states that 'there is no way to attack the infinite complexity of this moral and aesthetic problem except at its philosophic root'. This seems to me to be his initial fallacy; the attitude of his opponents to what Mr. Morgan calls 'pure story telling' is not a moral one; the problem is a technical and psychological one and should be attacked on technical and psychological grounds. Mr. Morgan's philosophy takes us nowhere. When he writes that what excites the spectator of a Greek statue is not erotic stimulus, sentimental or religious association, or an apprehension of the artist's technical mastery, that he is excited because the statue is a means of communication between him and the universal Beauty, he is really saying no more than that the spectator is excited because the statue is beautiful. 'And so we go round the prickly pear . . .' He is using terms which, however adequate as personal and private interpretation are inadequate as public explanation.

In the discussion of any art it is better to exclude the word beauty. It does not describe. It is a quality not of the object but of the spectator's emotion. When I say that such and such a statue is beautiful, I only mean that it has aroused in me a particular emotional feeling. It is more valuable for the critic to analyse the technical quality of the statue than the subjective response of the spectator which will vary with his mood. So it seems to me

to be valueless for Mr. Morgan to distinguish as he does between writers who, as he puts it, 'have power to communicate the universals' and those who have not. Those who have this vague numinous quality he calls aesthetic novelists. According to him neither Apuleius nor Fielding wrote a complete aesthetic novel, though in the interlude of Cupid and Psyche Apuleius communicated 'the universals' to Mr. Morgan. But what answer has Mr. Morgan, except perhaps a superior derision, when I reply that to me the interlude of Psyche is no more than a pretty, empty fable? Mr. Morgan's response to this love story may be the same as mine to the more realistic first encounter of Apuleius with Fotis. 'And I spake unto Fotis merrily and sayd, O Fotis how trimmely you can stirre the pot, and how finely, with shaking your buttockes, you can make pottage.' The subjective response by itself is hopelessly unreliable as criticism.

The danger to the novelist is that he should write with his mind on the subjective response of his readers instead of being concerned only to express his idea with the greatest accuracy and the greatest economy; it leads to a style in the sense that Pater and Landor had a style, a style which is too often only stylish. The aesthetic novelist comes to treat his reader as the lion tamer treats his performing lions. Watch the imagination take wing at the word of command. 'Beauty', 'dusk', 'weary' – there was a competition the other day for the most beautiful word in the English language, that is to say,

Graham Greene

words to which the imagination is supposed to react immediately without effort from the writer 'Dusk', 'weary', and the jaded lions leap, and one wonders what ancient memory of red hot irons spurs the words home.

One can well understand the attitude towards contemporary life of the aesthetic novelist. The jewelled phrase, the numinous word, have a certain shorthand significance in conveying an emotion, but they have not the exactitude to convey an accurate picture. A novelist's technique is always in part a method of avoiding what he finds impossible. So when Greene wrote: 'Can the flaxe resist the force of the fire? Can a lover withstand the brunt of beautie? Freeze, if he stand by the flame: pervert the lawes of nature, or eschew that which is framed by the fates, or flie from the force of fancie? No, for who so escapeth the deadlie darts of Cupid, shall be scorched with his fire, and she that with the dew of chastitie quencheth this flame, shall be overtaken with his wings, so that to seeke by flight to eschew affection is foolishlie to enterprise that which can never be atchieved': one may say that his use of evocative words (and his style seems only fresher to us than Landor's or Pater's because the particular evocative words have gone out of use in that connexion, while Pater's and Landor's remain), his use of flax and fire, freeze and flame, fates and fancy and darts of Cupid arises partly from his conscious inability to express plain mundane passion as Nash, for example, could express it: 'Not a

little was I delighted with this unexpected love storie, especially from a mouth out of which was naught wont to march but sterne precepts of gravitie and modestie. I sweare unto you I thought his companie the better by a thousand crownes, because he had discarded those nice tearmes of chastitie and continencie. Now I beseech God love me so well as I love a plaine dealing man, earth is earth, flesh is flesh, earth wil to earth, and flesh unto flesh, fraile earth, fraile flesh, who can keepe you from the worke of your creation?' It is equally true of course that Nash's style is in part an inability to write aesthetically as Greene wrote, but if we bear in mind that both styles are a confession of limitations, we shall be less tempted to admire the art of one as higher than the art of the other merely because it deals directly with what Mr. Morgan, following certain philosophers, calls universals.

To the unprejudiced observer indeed a technical point will emerge which may heighten his suspicion of the aesthetic school of novelists. Greene's trick of alliteration is only a more obvious version of Pater's and Landor's tricks of alliteration: the object is verbal music, and the object of this particular kind of verbal music can only be hypnosis; it is quite unconnected with subject. I distrust those writers who lend, in Mr. Morgan's phrase, 'wings to the imagination', only after first putting the mind asleep. But Nash's technical trick, his duplications, reinforce his meaning. His words couple like men and women.

The Seed Cake and the Love Lady

The attempt to catch the very note and trick of life has kept his diction upon its feet. Music the passage has, but not hypnotic music, and hypnotic music seems almost inseparable from the aims of the 'pure story teller', the writer without social consciousness.

I I

Let me quote two passages in support of my case. For convenience of comparison I have chosen from the start of this essay to quote passages with a common theme (passages which in the case of the aesthetic writers are intended to express the universal, Beauty, in one of its manifestations).

'Dost think of me differently now? Not so differently, Héloise, that I have forgotten thy soul. But can we think of the soul and body at the same time? When thou comest to me, the lamp held high, to learn all the sports of love from me, thou wilt not think of my soul – not then – but of thy pleasure, as I shall think of mine. Yet let it not be said that the soul and the intellect of the woman is forgotten by the man, though he cannot love body and soul at the same time. Each is loved in turn; without love of the body the love of the soul is a poor thing without purpose when the twain are side by side on a couch, nor valid even when thou sittest apart from me in a window seat; for we cannot think in the presence of the loved one, and still less can we dream; we prepare whilst on the couch or in the window seat for the hours that are to come when our love lady is

not by us.' (George Moore. *Héloise and Abelard*).

'the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leapyear like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you to-day yes that was why I like him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldnt answer first only looked out over the sea and the sky I was thinking of so many things he didnt know of Mulvey and Mr. Stanhope and Hester and father and old captain Groves and the sailors playing all birds fly and I say stoop and washing up dishes they called it on the pier and the sentry in front of the governors house with the thing round his white helmet half roasted and the Spanish girls laughing in their shawls and their tall combs and the auctions in the morning . . . and the wine shops half open at night and the castanets and the night we missed the boat at Algeciras the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and

Graham Greene

the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer little streets and pink and blue and yellow houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.' (James Joyce, *Ulysses*).

It is really a war between the seed-cake and the love lady. As far as the mere music of the two passages is concerned, one notices the same difference as between Greene and Nash. The music of George Moore's prose is hypnotic, it has no relation to subject, it does not vary with the subject; it was his deliberate intention to preserve an even texture of prose throughout a book, 'the strange irregular rhythm of life' was consciously avoided. But the rhythm of Mr. Joyce's prose 'savours', as Hazlitt wrote of Burke's, 'of the texture of what he describes, and his pen slides or drags over the ground of his subject, like the painter's pencil.'

George Moore, who began as a realistic novelist, never, perhaps, until his last completed novel, quite ceased to be conditioned by contemporary

life. It is as a model for other writers who do not possess his shrewd salacious mind that he is to be criticized, for he leads them into an easy tapestry land of creation, inhabited by abstractions and not characters. One cannot fail to notice that the two models on whom the aesthetic novelist generally bases his style are Moore and the translators of the Bible. The prose of the New Testament has a curious fascination for writers who want to by-pass their own times and arrive quickly at Truth and Beauty, curious because the fascination has nothing to do with the matter of the New Testament; they steal from it a poetic dignity while dropping the reason for the dignity. They have only to use certain rather archaic words, set to a simple New Testament rhythm, and the reader's associations do the rest. It is the lion tamer's trick again.

For it is not usually the man with a belief in traditional Christianity who juggles with universals; he is generally to be found on the side of the seed cake and old captain Groves. In the mind of one who believes in a personal God rather than in Truth and Beauty, the sponge of vinegar has its place with the seed cake. Indeed the real perils of a prose divorced from the social consciousness, from the note and trick of life, can best be seen, not by studying all the minor followers of Moore and Pater, but by comparing the style say of Mrs. Eddy with that of the religious leaders of a traditional Church. For this question is really wider than the limits of fiction; I can imagine no prose, critical, religious or philosophical,

The Seed Cake and the Love Lady

which does not suffer by its divorce from the social consciousness. Compare this passage with its abstractions and universals, what Hazlitt called 'tall phantoms of words', with a roughly parallel passage from Lancelot Andrewes.

'The wakeful shepherd beholds the first faint morning beams, ere cometh the full radiance of a risen day. So shone the pale star to the prophet-shepherds; yet it traversed the night, and came where, in cradled obscurity, lay the Bethlehem babe, the human herald of Christ, Truth, who would make plain to benighted understanding the way of salvation through Christ Jesus, till across a night of error should dawn the morning beams and shine the guiding star of being. The Wisemen were led to behold and to follow this daystar of divine Science, lighting the way to eternal harmony.' (Mary Baker Eddy).

"This name Saviour is so great as no one word can express the force of it." But we are not so much to regard the *ecce* how great it is, as *gaudium* what joy is in it; that is the point we are to speak to. And for that, men may talk what they will, but sure there is no joy in the world to the joy of a man saved; no joy so great, no news so welcome, as to one ready to perish, in case of a lost man, to hear of one that will save him. In danger of perishing by sickness, to hear of one will make him well again; by sentence of the law, of one with a pardon to save his life; by enemies, of one that will rescue and set him in safety. Tell any of these, assure them

but of a Saviour, it is the best news he ever heard in his life. There is joy in the name of a Saviour. And even this way, this Child is a Saviour too.' (Lancelot Andrewes).

It may be objected that this is simply to compare a bad writer with a good writer, but in my view the badness of Mrs. Eddy's style was due principally to its divorce from life. One must seek the cause of a bad style just as much as one seeks the cause of a good. No one is born a bad writer. It is not enough to say that Mrs. Eddy was illiterate; the illiterate have often been excellent writers. She had sincerity, a strong motive to write, and her loose abstract rhetorical prose might have been conditioned by the consciousness of her time into exactitude.

Take for further example these two passages. Anthony Sparrow was not an important writer, but his attempt to catch 'the trick of life' has saved him from the pale abstractions of Mrs. Eddy.

'The priest meeting the corps at the church stile, shall go before it to the grave, saying or singing, *I am the resurrection and the life*. This, in triumph over death, *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* . . . And this is Christian-like, whereas if we be sad and dejected as men without hope, *mortem Christi, qua mors superata est, calumniamur*; and heathens and atheists will deride us, saying, how can these condemn death, that cannot patiently behold a dead friend? talk what you will of the Resurrection, when you are out of passion, it is no great matter,

Graham Greene

nor persuades much; but shew me a man in passion of grief for the loss of his friend, playing the philosopher, and triumphantly singing to God for his happy deliverance, and I will beleieve the Resurrection.'

'Who shall say that man is alive to-day, but may be dead to-morrow? What has touched Life, God, to such strange issues? Here theories cease, and Science unveils the mystery and solves the problem of man. Error bites the heel of truth, but cannot kill truth. Truth bruises the heel of error – destroys error. Spirituality lays open siege to materialism.'

I may seem to have come a long way from the subject of pure story telling, from the aesthetic novel, but if one turns back to the quotation from George Moore, one can discern a real similarity between Mrs. Eddy's approach to the divine and Moore's approach to human love. Both are trying to take short cuts to a universal.

III

To sum up: when Mr. Morgan writes (the italics are mine), 'If I write in such a way that a reader feels that he is in the room I describe and that he hears the words I have set down on paper, *I have done no more than create a perfect delusion . . .* But, if, *with or without perfect delusion*, I can by the love story I tell liberate the reader's own imagination in such a way that he has, after reading my story, a livelier insight into love itself than he had before . . . then I am a great

artist', one can only retort that whatever Mr. Morgan in that case would be (and I think he would be more hypnotist than artist), he would not be a novelist, for a novelist must aim at perfect delusion. To treat delusion so cavalierly is to call in question the whole progress of the novel from Fielding to Henry James.

The question, as I have said, is not a philosophical one, it is technical and psychological. Without perfect delusion the reader's imagination cannot be liberated; he will be thinking of the author and himself; nor, and perhaps this is the real point of difference between us, do I believe that the delusion can be obtained by removing from the reader every landmark of his ordinary life (politics, religion, business), by leaving him in timeless world to watch two characters making not the familiar gestures between bed and door, but the styled gestures of a universal passion, of what Mr. Morgan calls love itself.

One naturally exaggerates one's opponent's point of view, but it does seem that the pure story is always the love story with the ruling passion of the time left out. Mr. Morgan's objection to the political consciousness of the modern novel (and one does not need to go so far as Countess Markievicz who wrote from prison, 'To-day life is politics . . . I can't invest my money without politics, buy clothes without politics', to feel that Mr. Morgan is an extreme admirer of the literature of escape) is equally an objection to the social consciousness

The Seed Cake and the Love Lady

of the eighteenth century writer, to the religious consciousness of the Jacobean, to the moral consciousness of the Victorians. The ruling passion changes with the century; in the days when politics meant the party manœuvrings of Liberal and Conservative, of Free Trader and Protectionist, the ruling passion could hardly be concerned with something so superficial; but to remove the moral consciousness from the Victorian novel, which in effect the aesthetic novelist did, was to leave it weak indeed, as weak as a Jacobean play without its questionings on death and eternity. The aesthetic novelist feels himself incapable of introducing into his work the ruling passion of his time: Greene could not cope with

the religious consciousness nor Landor with the moral, nor George Moore with the political, and it is only natural that they should have tried to make a virtue of a defect and believed that they had, by merit of their style, alone the secret of 'lending wings to the imagination.' Unfortunately, as I have tried to show, their real contribution to literature was endangered by their renunciations. Particular perils haunted the hermits in the desert, and few are the aesthetic novelists (I can think at the moment only of Alain Fournier) who have resisted the gross temptations of the Thebaid, the fine fleshly phrase, the vanity of the magic incantation: 'Say but the word and these stones. . . .'

A Boy in Prison

by Frank O'Connor

I

A FRIEND had promised to send me Heine's poems. To my disappointment he failed to get them and sent instead a school edition of *Hermann und Dorotea*. Those fine spring days, while the others were exercising, I lay on the floor of my cell and read and re-read it; two lines of it are still in my head, because in the days that followed I tried to take them as a precept.

*Menschen lernten wir kennen, und Nationen,
so lasst uns
Unser eigenes Herz kennend uns dessen
erfreun.*

The cell, condemned as inadequate for one, contained four; three slept on the floor and one across the radiator. My cell-mates were, Cronin, an ex-soldier and a very good-tempered fellow; Johnson, a big man with a laughing rogue's face, and a country boy whose name I have forgotten, dark, square-headed, handsome, silent and stupid. By day Cronin made rings out of shilling pieces and in the evenings he amused himself with me, singing.

On my first night in the prison I was wakened by the officer of the guard flashing his torch in my face. Some-

where down the passage I heard him, his voice echoing, say that there had been a raid and that one of our men had been captured — with a revolver. That meant death, and for a long time I remained awake thinking of death and what it meant, and of the man who would die so soon. I saw him as an embodiment of us all, young, poor, bewildered, struggling against we knew not what; his mother perhaps making a miserable living as a laundress in some slum. Then I thought of her; imagined her sitting by the fire at that moment, now screaming and struggling, now hushed and quiet, while her neighbours tried to comfort and reassure her. I imagined how she would go to the priest and beg him to intercede for her son, and how at last, wearied by her appeals, he would promise (perhaps with no intention of keeping his promise); then she, in the style of poor people like ourselves, would write to her boy to tell him that Father McCarthy or Father Maguire would speak for him, that the Blessed Virgin would intercede for him and the Sacred Heart watch over him. I imagined her going to early Mass, stumbling down the lane with the plaid shawl drawn tight

A Boy in Prison

about her face: kneeling far back in the darkness under the oblong gallery, her eyes fixed upon the suffering Christ and his weeping mother in their gaudy grandeur of crimson and blue. And she would pray half-aloud in a tortured whisper until to her tear-dimmed eyes the actor's face of Christ would seem to break into a pitying smile and she would be comforted . . . and at the same moment a green-clad officer with a pale dissolute face would put his revolver to the head of the bleeding figure writhing beside the prison wall . . . And that was life.

Early that morning I was wakened by Johnson, whose harsh and sneering voice was curiously subdued. He led me across the grey cylindrical building balconied and echoing, its tall barred windows aglow and framed in the half light of sloping stone. We went down another corridor which was quite dark. In one of the cells the morning light, cast upwards on to the arched and whitewashed ceiling and down again on the wall, picked out an officer, standing there, silent and very sinister in his grey-green uniform. Just as we entered what seemed a bundle of rags rose heavily from the tall square of darkness under the high window. There was a low growl from two or three men standing in the shadows. It took me some time to distinguish anything; then I noticed that the face of the man who had risen was swollen and black with beating.

'Ready?' asked the officer in an expressionless voice.

'Is this how you treat your

prisoners?' snarled Johnson, clenching his fists

'He should have thought of that when he was pouring petrol on the children last night.'

It was a lie, and we knew it, and we knew too what folly it was to speak. I held out my hand first, and the boy who was to die took it. To this day I remember the touch of his hand, and how it was swollen like his face and there seemed to be no bones in it. In silence we leaned over the balcony and through the suicide net watched him stumble down the clanking winding stair after the officer, past the heap of refuse stinking beside the high, barred gate, and disappear for ever from our sight through the little door that led to the world and eternity.

That night when I hung up my coat it was thick with vermin.

Sometimes – not often, for those periods of comparative silence were too precious – I took exercise with the others. It was very crowded outside; we had scarcely room to move in the yard, and the concrete circle round which convicts had walked served Ned and his gang for their rounders. What I did come to see was the nun. Behind the prison was a penitentiary for fallen women, and beside it the convent where the nuns who administered it lived; and every day while we were at exercise a nun sat beside an open window and waved to us. One only, never more; I felt the other nuns disapproved of us, and how much more of her! And in the solitary figure of that nun who had not yet detached herself

Frank O'Connor

from the world of passions that we represented, there was for me something terribly lonely and heartbroken, and for years the thought of her made me lonely too until at last I put her into a story called *Nightpiece With Figures*. But a number of the men preferred the back of the prison which was overlooked by the penitents' garden, and when the women were walking there in their wide French caps of starched linen, half a dozen faces would be pressed between the bars and whistles and cat-calls would ring out until the soldiers below raised their rifles. At a meeting of the prisoners a small, dark, talkative man made a very bitter speech against this indecency, and I suddenly started awake, for the man who was speaking might have been the original Baburin of Turgenev's greatest story. At the other end of the scale from these fanatical Baburins was my favourite, Ned, a ragged, toothless, underfed-looking man with blue eyes and a cropped skull, who invented a hundred follies to keep the men gay and remained himself, or so I think, a lonely, melancholy figure, a Pantaloon with a tragic heart. I should have loved to know more about him but he never responded to my overtures. I met him only once after, that was during an election and he looked more ragged and underfed than ever, and I felt that through his unswerving loyalty there was breaking a terrible disillusionment. Later I heard he tried to drown himself.

Cronin and I continued our sing-

ing. One night Matt Lenihan joined us. Matt was a gay lad with a melancholy voice. The three of us gave some offence by not joining in the Rosary. When Matt realized that we had missed it he was very depressed. He returned to his own cell groaning. We went to bed. Lights were quenched. The whole great prison sank into a sort of repose, broken by distant sniping. Then I heard stockinged feet come up the passage. It was Lenihan.

'O'Connor, kneel up and say the Rosary.'

'What's wrong with you, you mad bastard?' asked Cronin.

'I can't sleep. Honest to God, I can't. Listen, there were red and blue devils and every sort of thing tearing round the cell. We'll be damned if we don't say the Rosary. Do you hear me, O'Connor?'

Cronin struck a match. He was laughing and it was clear that he thought it a new and amusing prank. Lenihan was laughing too but there was a wild gleam in his eyes.

'Cronin, kneel up! Kneel up, O'Connor!'

'Go away to bloody hell from this!' shouted Johnson angrily.

'I won't go away until they say the Rosary. I won't stir a bloody foot until they say the Rosary. Lord God, is it destroyed you want me to be?'

He was dragging frenziedly at the pair of us, laughing all the while. At last he got us to our knees but he had scarcely got past 'In the name of the Father' when Cronin began to giggle. I giggled too. The country boy began

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to shake with half-suppressed laughter; next to join in was Johnson whose bad temper gave way before the spectacle of myself and Cronin on our knees and Lenihan giving out the Rosary. At last Lenihan himself joined in.

'Ah, Christ,' he protested, shaking helplessly with laughter and glauming wildly at myself and Cronin in the darkness, 'don't don't, ah don't, leave ye! We'll be all damned I tell ye. Ye bastards, will ye stop laughing? Ah, say the prayer, can't ye? Say the bloody prayer. Cronin, kneel up or so help me God I'll choke the life out of you.'

There was renewed scuffling and shouting and somebody began to knock on the cell wall. Stupid with mirth, Cronin was dragged once more to his knees; I slid back on to the mattress. Once more in tones that he tried to make deadly solemn Lenihan gave out 'In the name of the Father'. Then we all exploded in concert. Pausing for an instant I heard it about me, and thought I had never before heard such strange laughter. There was shouting all along the passage. 'What's up?' 'What's wrong with them?' 'Shut up, blast ye!' and so on.

'Oh, God,' groaned Lenihan. 'I'm destroyed. O'Connor, O'Connor, kneel up! Maybe you'll die to-night. Maybe they'll shoot you to-morrow morning. Kneel up! Oh, God, we'll have the sentries atop of us!'

A boot clattered in the corridor. Lenihan rose and fumbled his way out of the cell, groaning. I heard him replying to questions at every cell door,

shouting, his melancholy voice broken by wild bursts of hysterical laughter.

'The Rosary. They kept me from saying the Rosary and now I won't sleep a wink. Oh, God, what'll I do?'

II

In the early morning we were lined up, some hundreds of us, in the grey yard before the governor's house. From that we were taken in lorries through the barely-wakened city. After an hour in the train we were marched through another town to the terminus beyond a blown-up viaduct. It was April, and even that few minutes under the sun and so close to the green fields was unforgettable.

In the train again we were served with tinned fish. I ate none of it, for which afterwards I was thankful as it created a thirst there was no way of appeasing. Midnight came and we were still imprisoned in the train. Finally we reached a wayside station. It was flat country, not a hill anywhere. In the distance a searchlight moved up and down the sky and over the quiet fields, picking out whitewashed cottages and trees and flattening them against the night with sharp edges like pieces of theatre scenery, garish in their greens and whites. We moved towards it and it went with us, half-human in its mechanical precision. I was fascinated, watching it reveal the faces of my companions as they staggered on under their burdens, and the monstrous shadows, spreading and contracting,

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that drifted like smoke over the cardboard trees and hedges. It became almost a new sensation with hunger and thirst and weariness, and like a hallucination it made a fantasy of these; bursting upon us like a March wind, rising, falling, blooming upon the dark sky like a flower until its beams were blunted upon the shaggy side of some low cloud. Gradually we began to perceive what it was leading us to. Changing like the shapes of a kaleidoscope under that restless eye, there emerged a block of low irregular buildings. These too became part of the fantasy; now it was a long cement hall, its broken window-panes seeming like holes burned in canvas; now a group of small brown wooden huts, every board in them sharp as in an old woodcut, their canvas roofs shining like slates; now great red-brick buildings that looked like what they were, aerodromes. The image never remained still. The only fixtures in this fantastic world were the barbed-wire entanglements and the main gate which were lit with great arc lamps and the little wooden hut outside which we halted and in which we must be received. We stood there for hours; it was bitterly cold. It was early morning when I was admitted. I was marched to the quartermaster's hut and served out with a spring bed, a mattress and blankets. I lifted them and collapsed. Some of the prisoners carried my bedding while two tall military policemen helped me to my hut and saw me into bed.

When I opened my eyes next

morning I saw a long, many-windowed building, divided, at about the height of a man, into two aisles, in each of which were two rows of beds, iron and trestle. Everyone round me was asleep. I rolled up in brown prison blankets like my own, and the place suggested a Franciscan dormitory. Through the clerestory windows over my head I saw blue clouds. I was only a few yards from the door and through it and the side-door of the concrete porch outside it that someone had left unlatched I caught my first view of the compound. And there, beyond the sunken wire, glowed the fields!

It is the same picture I always see whenever I hear the Good Friday music from Parsifal; Parsifal's *Wre duenkt mich doch die Aue heut' so schoen* alone expresses the astonishment and delight of that waking. Everything was bright; there was a high wind blowing and it brought the breath of the fields about me; the prison and its horrors were far away.

III

The interior life of a place or a human being is so indescribable that I wonder we ever attempt it. Eleven years later I revisited this internment camp, now deserted, only to find I had lost my bearings in it. Then the framework of a gate started the engine of memory and I shot off. Suddenly the friend who was with me caught me by the arm and asked, 'What's wrong with you? Why did you do that?' It

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was some time before I realized what I had done that astonished him: I had made a sharp turn in one open place, had picked my way along a path once fenced with barbed wire, though now the path was obliterated and the barbed wire gone. That is what I mean by an interior life.

In the camp I soon lost touch with my old companions and made friends among the new. After prison with its rowdy and indiscriminate contacts this was a place of privacy and culture. There were a thousand internees but one came to know very few: in a town twice its size everyone would have known everyone else, but left to themselves men are unsociable and incurious. For the first few months it was easy to maintain the illusion that one was in a town; there were classes, lectures, plays, concerts, debates, books; the great dining hall in the North Camp had been rigged up as theatre and church with a stage at one end and an altar at the other.

In the mornings I was often first to wake, had a shower bath and a stroll and put in an hour's work at my books before old Dan came through the huts blowing reveille. Soon after that came first count. Military policemen stationed themselves outside while we stood at the foot of our beds and listened to the whistles coming nearer. Then one blew at our door, the hut-leader called us to attention and one of the camp command with a Free State officer stamped through the files, tapping each man as they passed. Sometimes counting and recounting

went on for an hour till we were sick of it. Next came Mass. It was a crippled service because we were all under ban, and only one man who served Mass communicated. When Mass was over the whistle went for breakfast, and after breakfast there were fatigues for those whose turn it was. I as a teacher was exempt from fatigues, and when I hadn't a class put in my morning at work. Except in the summer work was not easy, because in our great barrack of a hut there was a continuous hum of talk and tapping of improvised hammers, and men were all the time going and coming and stopping to ask questions or start aimless conversations. After dinner if it were fine there was a procession to the playing-field, a wide field overlooking the sea from which you could watch the trains puffing north and south. Then tea and finally that evening warmth of relaxation and debate of men who all their lives have been used to work, before the whistle sounded for second count and we rushed to the cookhouse for hot water for our tea or cocoa. When the lights had gone out for the last time the hut-leader gave out the rosary and then there was silence. It was a monastic existence, devoid of responsibility and care, and at first, particularly while fighting still went on outside and there was still chance of an honourable peace, I was happy enough.

My best friend was a country lad from the coast of Clare. I had been in camp only a day or two when he spoke to me and told me that he remembered poems I had contributed to a children's

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paper at the age of twelve or thirteen. He was a heavy youth with a more than labouring awkwardness; he can have been no more than nineteen, but his body was hunched and twisted like an old man's; he always shambled with eyes on the ground, a lock of jet-black hair hanging over one eye, his thick black brows knotted. His massive features that would have been the joy of a sculptor's heart had a sort of shimmering delicacy that suggested an intense interior conflict; he had a slight stammer that exaggerated the slowness of his speech, and when he spoke earnestly there appeared on each temple a faint pallor that somehow caught the light and made him seem transfigured. His smile, sometimes candid and wistful, sometimes brilliant and passionate, suggested lightning over a moor.

Neither of us had yet framed any criticism of our companions, but it was not long before we discovered that we differed from them in a certain robustness of outlook which we had in common. We both loved life. I first began to appreciate the distinction when I noticed in the autograph books that were always circulating in the camp the number of quotations from Shelley, a poet I disliked. But it was not only Shelley, it was Shelley's period and his type and all it stood for, Mazzini and Terence McSwiney and Pearse and a gospel of liberty and self-sacrifice and hero-worship which in Ireland has degenerated into a sickly idealism that covers every reality with a sort of syrup of legend. Against these

abstractions that reduce life to a tedious morality O'Neill opposed his knowledge of simple people and I the philosophy I had been acquiring from Goethe. To McSwiney's dictum that victory comes not to those who inflict most but to those who endure most I retorted in Goethe's phrase that a man must be either a hammer or an anvil.

I V

One began by feeling this idealism as a harmony: one ended by doubting the existence of a treble. When the whistle blew for count it was nominally for our own and not the enemy officer that we paraded and stood to attention. Later on that struck me as a rather silly evasion. And there was the astonishing tale of John Mahoney (let us call him that) which, in the beginning, seemed no more than the very funny incident it was.

John frequently disagreed with his hutleader. The hutleader said John was insubordinate, John retorted that the hutleader was favouring the other men at his expense. What the right and wrong of it were I don't profess to remember. At any rate, by way of protest John refused to do his fatigues.

So one day two policemen, that is to say two prisoners wearing armlets, brought John before the command court which consisted of several prisoners like himself, and the command court sentenced him to extra fatigues by way of punishment. These also he refused to perform and in a

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day or two he was up before the court once more. One would imagine that sensible men faced with the simple fact that John and his hutleader could not agree would simply send one or the other to a different hut. But no! Discipline must be preserved. So John was sent to prison.

Now the 'prison' was a tiny hut isolated on a knoll at the eastern end of the camp. That day the rumour spread and the compound was in an uproar. O'Neill and I rejoiced. It gave us the same feeling of moral relief we had experienced when we had found in some autograph book, cheek by jowl with a quotation from Shelley, those lines about the kiss 'that broke the mainspring of her heart and left her mouth wide open'.

But John, the doubly-imprisoned, was far from being beaten. He did something that staggered us all. He declared a hunger-strike. Not against the Free State, mark you, not against imprisonment in the camp, but against the Irish Republic and imprisonment in the isolation hut. And how was one to disentangle two causes from one creature? How could the Free State, with such a trifling complaint against so good a man, stand aside and allow him to be done to death by the wicked Republic, which at any rate it did not recognize? And how could John, who had seen his country's liberties pocketed by the Free State (which he did not recognize) and been its prisoner for a year, how could he accept the protection of a usurping authority against the legitimate Republic? John's

challenge was double-edge, infuriating logic.

How exactly it ended for him I forget, but his hash was settled at a mass meeting of the prisoners where the sacred principle of majority rule was proclaimed by the camp intelligentsia. Since we were ourselves a minority at war with the state I thought this illogical, but I must confess that I made very little effort to follow the speeches; my sympathies were too wholeheartedly with the outcast.

I became friendly with a big-boned, wild-faced man with a shaven skeleton head and a bare hairy chest. I called him the Prophet because he talked politics in a deep, thrilling rumble-bumble of a voice that tickled the drums of your ears. Both studious, we were condemned to exist apart in the large huts that were becoming increasingly difficult to work in. Besides, the fighting was over, releases took place every day, and an appalling restlessness had begun to invade the camp. One day we discovered that a group of men were being ejected from their room for insubordination. It was a charming room, warm and quiet and large enough for three: in an evil hour we applied for it.

I have called my friend the Prophet, but we were both prophets – and martyrs. For no sooner had we applied than we realized that we had committed in Irish eyes the unforgivable sin, and we were too proud to withdraw. If we hadn't applied no one else would have done so; the men would have been formally ejected, the

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room would have been vacant for a day or two, and then one evening they would have reappeared and taken up their old quarters without question. No discipline, no law can withstand that anarchic Irish personal factor that eats up principles as an old goat eats up a fence. You think you can build up a personal life, can sit at home and mind your garden? Just try. Sooner or later that old goat, for all the long stick that knocks so forbiddingly between his horns, will come through your fences and trample your flower beds and munch your fairest posies.

But we hadn't realized it. And solitary and dignified we carried our mattresses and beds and books into the new hut under a fire of taunts and threats from the ejected and their friends. There was vague talk of reprisals, beatings and police protection that pleased the camp for a fortnight.

And for a while my friend and I were very happy. We foregathered with our new hutmates at night over the stove, sang songs, swapped stories, debated. But disagreements arose between myself and the prophet, and oftener and oftener I heard the prophetic note in his voice, and less and less the lilting scatter-brained one that had enchanted me. Boom-boom-boom it went all day and the triangle between his brows became more marked, and I began to realize, dimly and helplessly, that my charming comrade looked on me as a devil incarnate. Why was that? I asked myself.

One day I arrived to find the prophet had posted over his bed a very

romantic poem, full of fine sentiments about liberty and martyrdom and recreants and what not else. It was not as bad a poem as I thought then, seeing in it nothing but a sermon directed against myself. That evening I wrote over my own bed in small but firm letters:

Neither in death nor life has the
just man anything to fear.

And that evening the prophet's brow was like a thunderstorm. When he spoke to me his voice was choked with passion. Nor, though I felt a distinctly just man, did I feel I had nothing to fear. Next day there was another poem over the prophet's bed, and the same evening I wrote over my own:

Grey, my dear friend, is all
your theory,
And green the golden tree of life.

After that we had a terrible row nor did we speak to one another again until the tragi-comedy ended, a few days later.

V

A young fellow from the south received a wire to say his mother was dying and begging him to come home. One could secure parole only by signing a declaration of allegiance (a savage condition, having regard to opinion within the camp which was dead against signing). It was a pity, I said, that God hadn't made mothers

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with the durability of principles. The mother, being of softer material, died, and the lad began to mope. Worse news came; his brothers and sisters had been left homeless, but this was kept from him. One evening he overheard a conversation about it and threw himself on the wires under the rifles of the sentries. When they brought him back to his room he said 'They wouldn't even shoot me!'

One morning the doctor ordered me to hospital. On the same day the great hunger strike was announced. It was decided, very cleverly, to put the issue, for and against, to the men at county meetings: this meant that the few like myself who opposed it were practically unheard. So close on a thousand men solemnly pledged themselves to abstain from food until they either died or were released. That evening I went into hospital.

On the same evening while I lay in my bed, rejoicing again in the feeling of clean linen and the myriad virtues of pillows, a military policeman brought in a tall lad with a vacant face who had to be undressed and put to bed. Then the policeman sat down by the bed and lit his pipe. It was the man whose mother had died; I had fresh reason to admire the durability of principles.

I did not sleep that night. A sigh, a stir of clothes and the tall lad slipped quietly out of bed and padded across the floor to the window beside me. He stood on the windowsill, gripping the bars with his hands, his face crushed between them. God only knows what he saw. Once I dozed and woke to

find him standing there, fixed by the searchlight, crucified against the bars, his grey shirt reaching half-way down his thighs. Another sigh and he padded back to bed again.

A few days later I left the hospital to be with O'Neill and the other objectors. It was a bitter, black day, the compound, almost deserted, was a sea of mud. I entered one hut to see a friend. The men were lying every way; some in bed, some dressed but unshaven; they did not look at me. Partitions and doors and lavatory seats, everything wooden had been torn away to make fires, round which groups of them sat gloomily, watching the pot of salt water that simmered there; the only sustenance they allowed themselves. But what struck me most forcibly was the silence: all that busy hammering and shouting was gone. As I left the hut I was followed by a general hiss – objectors were not popular.

Then it began to break: first in ones and twos, and then in small groups. These men's rations had to be claimed; that took a full day, so we objectors divided our food amongst them. The first-comers were treated with derision and contempt by the cookhouse staff, and it amused me to observe how with numbers they attained dignity: soon it was they who were bullying the cookhouse. The day after my return a big group of my county men broke, and the command hut which obviously rated my influence higher than I did ordered me to occupy a deserted hut and to enter no other.

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But the agitator who was speaking now was one much more eloquent than I, and him they could not lock up. In the next few days the break became an avalanche. Then came surrender. The soldiers brought buckets of soup to the wires and men tore themselves to dip their mugs in it. Bleeding, famished, ill, half-crazy, and yet happy seeing relief come, they snapped and fought like mad dogs while the soldiers sweated under the steaming buckets, the sentries lowered their rifles and the officers stood about smiling. O'Neill's face was very pale, and he spoke almost in a whisper. We both knew that what we were watching was the end of a period; the end, in our day at least, of something noble, priceless and irreplaceable. Afterwards there was another mass meeting. The command thanked and complimented the men; it was a splendid moral victory: the men cheered like mad, but all the same the camp remained what it was then, a grave, and a ruined grave at that. The national impossibilism had produced its deadly aftermath, apathy: it was not the weariness of a healthy man, it was the deadly thing with which we had been familiar

in our childhood and with which unless a miracle happens we must die – the moral stagnation of a people who at every turn reject life.

VI

It was a November day, bright and cold. I was sitting in O'Neill's room when a man burst in and called 'O'Connor, you're wanted. There's an officer looking for you.' I did not stir. It was a favourite and cruel joke. 'You're wanted, I tell you,' he continued. 'You're wanted,' said O'Neill with a wistful smile. And even then I only half-believed it. O'Neill and I went to my hut. The officer we were told had been and gone. I sat down, trembling, overcome by a sudden feeling of despair. And then a green-clad figure appeared in the doorway; it reminded me of another such I had seen in a dark cell in a city prison, but that had been a call to death, this was a call to life. 'Is O'Connor back yet?' asked the voice. 'Yes,' I answered weakly, 'Here I am.'

The Strong School of Women Novelists

by Osbert Sitwell

(1)

Preliminary Charge

MONSTROUS Regiment,
You have hung up your harps of gold,
With unenviable magic
Have transformed them
To singing avenues of tin type-writers!
No longer, as of old,
You squat upon rectangular cubes
Of governess-green canvas
Amid iron dustiness and screeching bustle
Of foreign stations,
To write those endless letters to a friend;
 Girlish descriptions of Mont Blanc,
 Swiss rhapsodies of edelweiss, cuckoo and cowbell.
No: you have mechanized yourselves
Until,
 Just as the flashing waterfalls of which you wrote
 Have since been harnessed to produce illumination,
So you have tapped your energy.
Your drumming fingers rap
Interminable novels of Life in the Raw; abominations
 (Tip-tap, Tip-tap, Tip-tap,
 O tippety-tap!)

Osbert Sitwell

(2)

Plea

O most monstrous regiment
Of women-novelists,
Show mercy!
Remove your faces from the covers,
Quit querulous explanation
Of why your heroines take lovers,
Abandon bone-thin chatter
Of psychological reaction,
And the stark chasing of a recalcitrant complex
Through half-a-million words,
Renounce your daily reading of the work of D. H. Lawrence
And announcements of what he means to you
 (But what would he have *said* to you, I wonder?
 What would he not have said?),
Cease your drinking of dank
 — O so dank — tea
And all parade of fondness for your dog
 — Intolerable extension
 Of an already intolerable personality —
And listen — WILL you listen — to me!

(3)

Interrogation

Do you never think, monsters,
 After, thank heaven, that the party is over,
 After the last botulistic sandwich
 Has poisoned the last publisher,
 And the charwoman has reserved the tea-leaves
 For a further cleaning of floors,
Do you never think, even then,
Of an empty cradle
And an empty kitchen?

Do you really consider
That the boastful yelping and yapping
Of your pink-eyed, white chrysanthemum-like Sealyham

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Does duty for the questions of a child,
That companionship consists
In the bittern-boom of Bloomsbury,
And that as good things
Come out of the tin
As go into it;
Do you; *do* you?

Out to Luncheon

Consider again, then! Reflect upon your days . . .

All through the morning,
 Between the rounds of aspirin and tea.
You beat your hard tattoo of words;
Dark, meaningful words
 That yet will fall, soft rain
 To dampen the sprouting, cellar hearts
 Of literary agents,
 Weaving perpetually frustrated webs
 Within the yellow glass towers of the fog.

Now strikes the hour
For luncheon with a publisher.
Toss your head, comb matted hair,
Fit gloves on skeleton-thin fingers,
Give a final titillating tug
To your *sombrero*.
Snap goes your handbag
 — Repository of powerful germs — ;
Click down the latch, stump out and clamp
A smile of rustless steel upon your face.
Remember, when you enter the assembly,
To adopt a touch of farm-hand grace,
(So ill at ease, you know, in cities):
But let the camera,
 In its eternal moment of magnesium,
Surprise you looking strong.

Osbert Sitwell

(5)

Leaving Early

Time to go; already time to go.

'What a *delightful* luncheon, Mr. Whimple,
Thank you; good-bye.
Good-bye, Mr. Smather (*dear* Mr. Smather), good-bye
I *loved* your last book, Mr. Scrabble,
Good-bye, good-bye.
O, Mr. Smither, that review!
Entrancing, like all your work, so . . .
— well *you know* . . .

Good-bye.
Good-bye, Mr. Whimple, again
And again.
What? . . . *Recommended*, did you say, by your society?
And you never told me until now?
(Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!)
And over there do I see Mrs. Whimple;
Can it really be,
And never a word with her?
Good-bye.
(Promise to come and see my chickens at the farm!)
Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye:
And again, Thank You.'

(6)

Afternoon

Rush home. You have no time to thank
The boy who lifts you in a communal cage
Up to your floor. Insert the key,
Call drearily for tea, more tea.
Then drop your smile
Upon a shelf nearby
(It may be wanted in a while)
With hard, metallic rattle
And type again

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— For as the sea-slug, much esteemed in China,
Shoots out, when moved by anger or by fear,
Its entrails, so must you
Release these living words
To die within a sea of print —
Until the time comes round
For book-tea or book-talk,
Committee-meeting and a Pen-Club dinner.

(7)

Sham Atlas

O most monstrous regiment
Of prating, slate-like women,
Will it never be time
— I will not say for bed
But time —
For sleep?
Sham female Atlas,
Will you never let the willing world
Fall from your shoulders?
Abhorrent is your strength,
Faked muscles of stage strong-men
Fitted upon thin arms.
Will you never forego
The tinkle of the tea-spoon and the talk
And cure your cold?

(8)

Female Esau

Most abominable regiment,
How often, how sincerely,
Have I wished you back in your empty kitchen
Away from this wearying chatter of net-sales.

How often have I wished
That the tending of living things

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Could soften your hardness —
 And harden your softness, too —
That you would knit socks,
 Less woolly than your writings
 And more strong,
Cease telling stories of your dogs,
And, when conversation fails,
Read Fanny Burney and Jane Austen
 Until you comprehend, not without grief,
 The immense and delicate birthright
You have sold for an aspirin tablet
 And a tea-leaf.

May, 1934

Alternatives to Liberalism

by George Santayana

WHY be troubled if events do not everywhere follow the liberal programme of progress? This programme is a party document, demanding the success of liberalism — apparently its ultimate and eternal success. But liberalism presupposes very special conditions. It presupposes a traditional order from which the world is to be emancipated. It presupposes heroic reformers, defying that order, and armed with a complete innate morality and science of their own by which a new order is to be established. But when once the traditional order has been thoroughly destroyed, that kind of heroic reformer may well become obsolete. His children will have no grievances and perhaps no morality. Even the abundance of their independent sciences, without an ultimate authority to synthesize or

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interpret them, may become a source of bewilderment. Nothing may remain except a mechanical hurly-burly, moral disintegration, and intellectual chaos. Add internecine war and a break-down in industry, and there may seem to be occasion for turning over a new leaf. As to what may be found, or may come to be written, on the next page no political programme can give us any assurance. Under different circumstances, in various places, different new things may appear, or various old things under new names.

The word 'liberalism' sometimes describes a method of government and sometimes a principle of thought. If liberalism were simply a principle of thought it would throw the mind open to all alternatives. It would smile on all types of society, as on the birds, reptiles, and carnivora at the Zoo. It would remember that every organic being prizes its own type of perfection and strives to preserve and to reproduce it. In so far, however, as liberalism is a method of government, it may well cause those who live under it to think any other method of government strange and irrational, or even wicked; especially well-to-do people, since liberalism protects their comfort and otherwise lets them alone. Even more vexatious systems, when established by law and custom, come to seem like one's native language, alone normal and intelligible. In this way liberalism as a method of government may end by making liberalism difficult as a principle of thought. Hence the sur-

prise and distress of so many liberals at the appearance of a Lenin, a Mussolini or a Hitler.

I think that liberalism in thought – in other words, impartial philosophy – is equally possible under all forms of society, because it is never social. It eludes social pressure. A man anywhere may find an intellectual satisfaction in seeing things through their causes and not through current passions, and may learn sympathetically to appreciate their intrinsic merits. Disinterested insight is permitted to any fish in any river, provided he can get his nose out of the water.

But no, say our immersed philosophers, you can't live out of your native element. You can't breathe mere air; and where there is no life there can be no sympathy or intelligence. You must see things, they tell us, through your warm passions, or everything will seem ghostly. However much you may air yourself and try to be impersonal and speculative, you will still be looking at the world from your watery home, and with your fishy eye; but you may have lost your vital impetus and love of swimming. Better, then, keep your head busily under water, and follow your bait.

This gospel of total immersion would appear to confirm the liberal mind in its autonomy; yet this very absoluteness in the individual, this perfect satisfaction in his own impulses and opinions, since it is attributable also to others, drives him to an ulterior impartiality and liberalism of thought.

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His constitutional confinement to his own person and circumstances becomes a humorous predicament in his own eyes, and his true spirit escapes into an international and superhuman liberty. Indeed, I think the best inspiration of liberalism has been the desire to lift all men, as far as possible, into such enlightenment. For that purpose barriers were to be broken down, and poverty and prejudice cleared away. The forms which the free mind might take, since it was free, could not be predetermined; and the sphere of government was accordingly limited to the protection of life and property. But in practice that ulterior free life, in religion, art, and polite letters, remained rather confused and vaporous; those were after all fantastic matters of merely private concern. It might almost be said that only material interests, closely guarded by law, were felt to be important; and that the free life beyond, the supposed justification of everything, was moonshine.

This result would have been more obvious were there not certain intermediate fields, like education, national defence, and inheritance, to which liberal principles have never been thoroughly applied. If, for instance, the State undertakes education and makes it compulsory, it has refused in that respect to be a liberal state and has become paternal. The matter was too important to be left to chance; it was too important to be left to miscellaneous religious bodies. Yet the same solicitude and the same constructive impulse would consistently

justify the state in controlling industry, sport, amusements, art, and religion. Then government would have assumed the total control of life in the governed, and the liberal division of functions between material order and moral liberty would have been abandoned.

Totally to control life in the governed and render society organic has always been the aim of theocracies, and was the ideal proposed on rational moral grounds by Plato and Hegel. This ideal was actually realized in ancient city-states, as far as the slipshod character of human existence permitted. But such an ideal is incompatible with Christianity, which reserves the things that are God's, to form a revealed, international, spiritual system from which nevertheless many moral and practical consequences flow, affecting the things that are Caesar's. A modern social autocracy would have to choose, and either declare itself officially Christian, accepting those supernatural presuppositions as a part of its structure, or else extirpate Christianity altogether, as the Roman Empire, Islam, and the French Revolution felt a strong impulse to do, though the event eluded them. Italy seems to have chosen the first alternative, and Russia, the second, while Germany hesitates, torn between the glory of being wholly heathen and the fact of being partly Christian.

The dream of unanimity is glorious because human nature is social even in its freest flights, longing for approval, for moral support, for sweeping en-

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thusiasms. There is therefore some difficulty in carrying out the liberal project, apparently so simple, of regulating only material things legally, while leaving spiritual things to private initiative. Such private initiative at once takes to propaganda. Having eluded social pressure, we proceed to exert it. Even philosophers and literary critics seem to be deeply unhappy if other literary critics and philosophers do not agree with them. Now if individuals and sects feel compelled to proselytize, might it not be simpler and more decent that the work of propaganda should be committed by the government to persons educated in their subject, and probably saner and more in sympathy with the national temperament than a lot of discordant agitators would be likely to be? Certainly official minds are not fountains of originality. The virtues and truths to be disseminated must have first taken shape spontaneously in individuals, perhaps in foreigners; but it remains for the genius of the age and nation to adopt and adapt these gifts according to its necessities. It has been governments, for the most mixed motives, that have usually taken the decisive step in religious and moral transformations, such as the establishment of Christianity, the Reformation, and the liberal revolution itself. These novelties were imposed by decree, after some change of monarch or court intrigue or military victory, on whole populations innocent of the business. So to-day it is remarkable how swiftly a virtual unanimity can be secured in a

great and well-educated nation by the judicious management of public ceremonies, of the Press and the radio. Perhaps without official coercion it would be impossible to form a definite type of citizen in our vast amorphous populations, and to create an unquestioning respect for a definite set of virtues and satisfactions. And perhaps mankind, without such moral unanimity, might find little glory or joy in living. It would be by no means necessary to suppress freedom of thought. To those who know their own will no knowledge is dangerous; it all becomes useful or pleasant. No serious book need be prohibited; and the publication of anything whatsoever might be allowed, if the form was suitable for specialists and the price high enough. But there should be no unauthorized propaganda and no diffusion of cheap lies.

Above all, no lies inserted in the State catechism. The whole force of authority lies in speaking for realities, for necessities interwoven before man was man into the very texture of things. This is not to demand that any official philosophy, or even the human senses or reason, should be clairvoyant or omniscient: such a demand would be preposterous. All that is needed or possible is that the myths and slogans approved by authority should express pertinently the real conditions of human life, harmonizing action and emotion with the sides of reality important for human happiness. Here I seem to see a grave danger threatening the restorations of

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organic society that are being attempted in our day. Our minds are sophisticated, distracted, enveloped in a cloud of theories and passions that hide from us the simple fundamental realities visible to the ancients. The ancients were reverent. They knew their frailty and that of all their works. They feared not only the obvious powers bringing flood, pestilence, or war, but also those subtler furies that trouble the mind and utter mysterious oracles. With scrupulous ceremony they set a watch-tower and granary and tiny temple on some grey rock above their ploughed fields and riverside pastures. The closed circle of their national economy, rustic and military, was always visible to the eye. From that little stronghold they might some day govern the world; but it would be with knowledge of themselves and of the world they governed, and they might gladly accept more laws than they imposed. They would think on the human scale, loving the beauty of the individual. If their ordinances were sometimes severe under stress of necessity, that severity would be rational, or at least amenable to reason. In such a case, holding truth by the hand,

authority might become gentle and even holy.

Now, on the contrary, we sometimes see the legislator posing as a Titan. Perhaps he has got wind of a proud philosophy that makes the will absolute in a nation or in mankind, recognizing no divine hindrance in circumstances or in the private recesses of the heart. Destiny is expected to march according to plan. No science, virtue, or religion is admitted beyond the prescriptions of the State. Every national whim is sacred, every national ambition legitimate. Here is certainly an intoxicating adventure; but I am afraid a city so founded, if it could stand, would turn out to be the iron City of Dis. These heroes would have entrenched themselves in hell, in scorn of their own nature; and they would have reason to pine for that liberal chaos from which their Satanic system had saved them. Fortunately on earth nothing lasts for ever; yet a continual revulsion from tyranny to anarchy, and back again, is a disheartening process. It obliterates the same traditions that might have prevented this see-saw if they had been firmer and more enlightened.

Biography and Curiosity

by R. W. King

THE simplest things, it is notorious, are often the hardest to describe or define: the soul, love, art, poetry, history, biography. Such things seem to belong to a class of phenomena which, involving in some way that mysterious activity *life* or *consciousness*, are (in the metaphysical jargon) objects of 'knowledge by acquaintance' rather than of 'knowledge by description'; that is, we may easily recognize them without fully understanding their nature. Plutarch's *Lives*, we say glibly, are biographies, and Johnson's *Savage*, and Boswell's *Johnson*. But this of course is an evasion; it does not satisfy our natural curiosity concerning the aims and methods of biography in general.

The most obvious way to set about such an inquiry is to seek light from some of those who have had much to do with the practice of biography. That universally abused but universally used store-house of learning, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, comes inevitably first to mind. Let us consider the opinion of its most active editor. The late Sir Sidney Lee, known for his lives of Shakespeare, Queen Victoria, and Edward VII, was also joint or sole editor (in succession

to Sir Leslie Stephen) of two-thirds of the sixty-three volumes of the original *D.N.B.* In *Principles of Biography*, a lecture delivered at Cambridge in 1911, Lee traced the existence of biography to 'the commemorative instinct – the universal desire to keep alive the memories of those who by character and exploits have distinguished themselves from the mass of mankind'. He proceeded, somewhat quaintly, to lift the Aristotelian definition of tragedy – 'an imitation of some action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude' – and to apply it to the subject-matter of biography. 'Complete', needless to say, cuts out all studies of living persons. Indeed, the lecturer dwelt with almost ghoulish gusto on the necessity, if you wish to become what he called 'a fit biographic theme', for being well and truly dead:

Living men have been made themes of biography. But the choice defies the cardinal condition of completeness. Death is a part of life and no man is fit subject for biography till he is dead.

Perhaps it was on this occasion that the oft-quoted remark was made that

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the *D.N.B.* 'adds a new terror to death'. 'Seriousness', for this purpose, Lee defines as a quality that 'stirs and firmly holds the attention of the earnest-minded'; and the 'magnitude' of an achievement he would measure roughly by the number of times the same or a similar thing has been done – thus Shakespeare is greater than Wellington, because Shakespeare was unique, but Wellington was succeeded by Roberts, Kitchener, and other more or less equally eminent generals.

It is an odd sort of mathematics. Indeed, the whole argument strikes one as faintly comic; and when we turn to the *D.N.B.* itself it does not seem to fit in at all well. For even in its original form (there have been several supplements) the *D.N.B.* dealt with more than twenty-five thousand persons. All of them certainly were dead; but very few – not more than a tenth at most – could be said to have lived careers either 'serious', in Lee's sense, or of any perceptible magnitude whatever. How many readers of these lines have heard of Jacques Abbadie, who claimed to have proved the truth of the Christian religion in 1684? – or of William Nassau De Zuylestein, second Earl of Rochford, whose only title to fame seems to be that he was aide-de-camp to the Duke of Marlborough in 1704? They may be found respectively on the first and the last page of the *Dictionary*. Near the middle there is a block of about a hundred and forty Joneses, of whom perhaps a dozen would be more or less familiar names to the average educated reader; the rest,

with a like proportion of the Smiths (nearly two hundred in all), the Browns (about seventy without 'e' and fifty with it), and the Robinsons (about sixty) would fail miserably by this test. Their dubious immortality depends for the most part on some fortuitous association with a person or event that really does appeal to our commemorative instinct.

Clearly, if Lee were right, we should have expected something more like six than sixty-three volumes of national biography. As it is, the whales are swamped by the sprats, and 'when everyone is somebody, then no-one's anybody'. Nevertheless the *D.N.B.* is still, half a century after its inception, a work which (as the present publishers truly as well as temperately remark) 'all important libraries in the Empire will no doubt consider it desirable to possess'. Nor do its value and interest depend on its dealings with the really great. Someone has justly said of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* that the best things in it are his Blackmore, his Fenton, his Sprat, rather than his Milton or Dryden or Gray; and much the same is true of the *D.N.B.* Both for profit and for pleasure, it is the small men's biographies that we read and refer to; the celebrities are amply served elsewhere, and obviously they were included only for completeness. So that when Lee declares peremptorily that it is 'not the business of biography to appease mere inquisitiveness', he seems to be not only in danger of fouling his own nest, but flatly saying the thing which is not. 'Mere

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inquisitiveness' merely means curiosity about something in which the speaker does not happen to be interested; and curiosity, whatever its quality, is at any rate both a more fundamental and a more wide-spread instinct than the desire to commemorate. Curiosity that is both intense and persistent is, indeed, the main motive of all exploration, all discovery, all scholarship.

Simple curiosity, then, is the most natural and intelligible explanation of our pleasure in reading about the lives of our fellow-mortals – if only because it shows why we do not in fact estimate the value of a biography by the eminence of the subject, and why the biographical study of a living person, though handicapped in ways too evident to need mentioning, can give us a great deal of pleasure: Mr G. K. Chesterton's book on Mr. Bernard Shaw is a good instance.

What has been said so far is not, perhaps, likely to be very seriously disputed nowadays. Yet one conclusion that might appear to follow is rejected by several critics, who declare English biographies to be, as a class, a poor lot. Various reasons are given for this. Mr. Osbert Burdett thinks that the English, as a practical people, tend to glorify success unduly, whereas it is often the failures who would make the better subjects for biography, but who are neglected till it is too late to begin collecting materials.¹ Mr. Harold Nicolson, another practising biographer whose views should be instructive, distinguishes between 'pure' and 'impure' biography, the former

being pronounced very good and the latter very bad.² But when we have gone through his historical survey of English biographies, we find the list of those entitled to be labelled 'pure' contains only two items – Boswell's *Johnson* and Lockhart's *Scott*! So long as Boswell receives his due, no one is likely to look very closely at the way it is done; but Lockhart's seven large volumes, I suspect, are rather oftener praised than read, even by professed Scott-worshippers;³ and while recent research has not only rescued Boswell from the clutches of Macaulay but steadily heightened his reputation, Lockhart has already had some shrewd knocks, and it is difficult to say where he will stand by the time Professor Grierson has finished the new edition of Scott's letters. But no matter. Passing this point, the judgment that we have no other really good biographies seems strangely severe.

Mr Nicolson's examination of the faults that make most English biography 'impure' is in itself sound enough. The faults *are* faults, and common ones, though we may doubt whether they have gone so far or had such fatal results as he thinks. There is, first, the 'undue desire to celebrate the dead' – which is, more or less, Lee's 'commemorative instinct'. Mr. Nicolson can hardly mean that this desire is an evil in itself, or how should

¹ 'Experiment in Biography', in *Tradition and Experiment in Present-Day Literature*, Oxford, 1929.

² *The Development of English Biography*, London, 1927.

³ It is perhaps significant that one meets with at least twenty quotations from or allusions to Boswell for one from Lockhart.

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Boswell and Lockhart themselves 'scape censure? Still, we should all, or nearly all, agree to-day that the suppression of known truths, to which motives of 'reverence', 'discretion' and the like have often led, is undesirable. Boswell was right when he bluntly refused Mrs. Hannah More's entreaties to 'mitigate some of the asperities of our most revered and departed friend'; he would not, he declared, make his tiger a cat to please anybody. Similarly the frankness of Froude's *Carlyle* was, on the whole, a good thing, and the burning of Byron's autobiography a bad one; the reticence of the families of Thackeray, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne and many other Victorians did harm which is only now beginning to be partially repaired. What the biographer knows, or thinks he knows, he should lay before his readers openly and without material reserves; if he cannot do this he should let the subject alone. Gosse's emasculated *Life of Swinburne* – the last of the Victorian biographical tombstones – is a dreadful warning of the dangers of slighting this rule, which Gosse himself had so ingeniously and so successfully contrived to uphold in his masterpiece, *Father and Son*.

The second fault is described as the presence of a purpose extraneous to the work itself: the application of biography to theology, as in early lives of saints; to moral edification, as in Walton's *Lives* and most Victorian biographies; or to controversy of some kind, as in many books on Joan of Arc and Mary Queen of Scots, or some of

Mr. Hilaire Belloc's historical biographies, or Mr. G. K. Chesterton's recent study of Chaucer, which is just a variation on his usual theme, 'Merry England before the Reformation'. But here I am not so sure that we can dogmatize safely. Mr. Chesterton's book is excellent fun, at any rate. And an epic, a novel, even a play, can have a purpose without being spoiled: why not a biography? Certainly Stanley's 'edifying' *Life of Dr. Arnold*, and the once orthodox chatter about Burns's 'failure' and 'ruin', in many books about him, are exasperating. Yet there is a strong moralizing element in Johnson's admirable life of his friend Richard Savage, the talented wastrel who was ruined (really ruined this time) through his belief that he was the disowned illegitimate son of a wealthy countess. It would be flatly ridiculous to wish that Johnson had left out the moral reflections; it is not simply that they are 'harmless' – the whole thing would fall to pieces without them. Even in Walton the sins are those of omission rather than of commission; his moralizings are not without their charm. Again, Cobbett's *History of the Regency and Reign of King George the Fourth*, which is biography so far as it is anything describable, is chock-full of political and personal prejudice of the crudest kind; but it contrives to be at any rate highly entertaining. Perhaps the only general rule we can make here is that if the biographer has an axe to grind he should do it openly.

The third and last fault in Mr.

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Nicolson's list is 'undue subjectivity in the writer'. As he admits, it is a rather vague objection, since a biographer can hardly help depicting himself as well as his subject; and in a certain sense, much as Shakespeare is written all over *Hamlet*, so Johnson is written all over the *Life of Savage*, and Boswell over the *Life of Dr. Johnson*. This is surely just a matter of the modesty of nature, of due proportion; no writer should inappropriately thrust himself forward in his own person. There is more than a touch of this irritating egotism in Mr. Morley Roberts's *W. H. Hudson: A Portrait*, in Frank Harris's 'unauthorized biography' of Mr. Bernard Shaw, and in many more; but except in the special class of biographies by a friend, an acquaintance, or an enemy of the subject, it has not been nearly so common a vice as the others.

What, after all, do these objections and cautionary counsels amount to? – that a biographer should be truthful 'The primary essential', says Mr. Nicholson, 'is that of historical truth, by which is meant not merely the avoidance of misstatements, but the wider veracity of complete and accurate portraiture.' But the sense in which these words are taken really begs the question by suggesting that the standard and the test of truth in dealing with human personalities is the same with that in those highly abstract and (strictly speaking) non-real activities, the experimental sciences. It seems to be assumed that there is a single body of truths about a man,

which has only to be put together 'intelligently' (the word is Mr. Nicolson's) to produce a perfect biography, an 'accurate portrait'; just as it is assumed – or used to be – that there is, for example, a body of truths about the atom or the electron which when put together settles that part of chemistry or physics once for all. These pseudo-scientific metaphors and analogies are continually cropping up. Lee compared history to mechanics and biography to chemistry. Frank Harris (oddly enough, when we recall his absurdly romantic *Shakespeare the Man*) likened the perfect biographer to a zoologist classifying a new sort of bird with 'high detachment' and 'scrupulous care' as if the zoologist could tell us anything about the bird as a living creature comparable in value to such an accurate portrait as W. H. Hudson's sketch 'Cardinal: The Story of My First Caged Bird'!¹ Mr. Nicolson himself looks forward to an age of scientific biography, which will include such things as 'medical biographies – studies of the influence on character of the endocrine glands, studies of internal secretions'. Not surprisingly, the 'literary' biography, which (we are to assume) was never more than a sort of crude science, is to disappear entirely. What is all this but the jargon of an age when quackery itself parrots the terminology of Einstein and Pavlov?

The real men of science have, of course, for some time felt doubts whether a purely mechanistic philosophy will do as a basis for examining

¹ In *Adventures Among Birds* (1913).

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even physical phenomena. But not all men of letters (or historians either) have as yet realized this; some of them are still trailing in the rear, enslaved to the cruder materialism of the nineteenth century. Is it not obvious that it is quite possible to have several lives of the same person, all about equally truthful and equally interesting, but differing considerably in their points of view? An excellent instance is furnished by three fairly recent books on Wordsworth, those of Mr. Fausset, Mr. Herbert Read, and the late Professor Herford. There is nothing really corresponding to this in the experimental sciences. It would seem, then, that successful biography does not depend simply on the intelligent presentation of what is objectively verifiable. Boswell and Lockhart, according to Mr Nicolson, 'merely, with the requisite degree of taste and selection, furnished facts'. This reminds one of Arnold's notorious description of poetry as 'a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty'; the 'taste and selection', like the 'laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty', make all the difference – in short, they give the whole show away.

The fact is that 'historical truth' is simply *one* of the agreed rules of the game of biography, which might be worked out on something like the following lines. Clearly a mere heap of papers – letters, wills, diaries and other documents – does not make a biography; the documents are the objec-

tively verifiable evidence, available for any biographer who comes along. Whoever he may be, we expect him not to falsify any of this evidence; a demonstrable garbling of the documents is to be condemned as overpassing the line between biography proper and fiction. But if the biographer is to be more than a mere compiler or editor, if he is to give us that 'living portrait' which we indubitably though rather vaguely demand, he must be allowed a great deal of freedom in manipulating his material; he must be the final judge of what is important, and he must often risk inferences and pass judgments which are not in any way objectively verifiable. Biographies, like histories, if they are worth anything, are *made*, not deduced like geometry or metaphysics; they are always *somebody's* history or biography, and inevitably it is not the bare facts (bare facts do not occur in nature) which emerge, but this somebody's relation to the facts (or events). Thus it is an art, not a science, that the biographer and the historian have to practise.

'The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' is as absurd a demand to make of a biographer or a historian as of a witness in the law-courts; in either case truthfulness or sincerity is what we really want. What may be called intelligent or fair-minded bias (that is, a definite point of view) is actually an advantage: 'Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.' If we wish to know what happened, that is, to understand

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an event or a character, we may thank heaven if each of our witnesses has a pronounced bias of his own; for only so can they give us any foothold for climbing to a point from which we may get views for ourselves.

This confusion between a fair-minded and an 'impartial' or 'scientific' spirit in biography has been particularly dangerous of recent years, when the main trend of fashion has favoured an unsympathetic or even satirical attitude such as that of Lytton Strachey to Dr. Arnold or Cardinal Manning. Both *Eminent Victorians* and *Queen Victoria* gave us quite as much truth as, and more entertainment than, most earlier biographies in English; but a good deal of nonsense has been talked about these admirable works. To suggest, as has often been done, that either is in any real sense a 'scientific examination of temperament', or that detachment or objectivity is gained by inverting the Victorian fashion of hero-worship, is absurd. There is quite as much personal, and even theological, prejudice in Strachey as in Dean Stanley, whose failure was due not to his bias towards pious hero-worship but to a fundamental insincerity. Strachey is far more faithful, not to the truth as it is (that, as he would no doubt have blandly agreed, is beyond the power of any single person), but to as much of the truth as he can really see himself. This general statement is, indeed, more strictly true of *Queen Victoria* than of *Eminent Victorians*, which does, here and there, distort if not exactly falsify the

evidence; it tells us (indirectly of course) rather too much about its author. In *Queen Victoria* the balance between subjective and objective, between biographer and 'biographee', is kept almost exactly right; and we feel that one who came to scoff remained, if not to pray, at least to grant ungrudgingly that the Queen had sound stuff in her. Strachey's bias was, in fact, an essential element in his success; it was a real human being that he (rather reluctantly) learned to respect, not a sort of police-court case on which he passed an 'impartial' verdict of not guilty.

Every true biography, then, and every true history also, is a work of imaginative art – not, of course, that they have no dealings with the world of actuality, but that this 'scientific' part of the work is necessarily subordinated to the imaginative, to that vision of experience valued in and for itself which, as Croce and Abercrombie have shown, is the substance of all art. They are, in short, particular cases of the art of fiction; the condition of their being is analogous to that in pictorial art whereby it is at any rate generally assumed that a portrait should be recognizably a representation of the person whose name it bears. And just as a photograph is not a portrait, because the photographer's personality (as distinct from his mechanical skill) contributes nothing to the result, so an 'impartial' history, an 'objective' biography, are not true history or biography, but more or less lifeless summaries of the material available.

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Perhaps indeed Mr de la Mare is right, and all knowledge – even physical science itself – is nothing till it is ‘projected’ or made real on the map of the imagination:

O Poesy, of wellspring clear,
Let no sad Science thee suborn,
Who art thyself its planisphere!

All knowledge is foredoomed, forlorn –
Of inmost truth and wisdom
shorn –
Unless imagination brings
It skies wherein to use its wings.

Certainly this is true of history and biography.

The Fighting Cock

by H. A. Manhood

THE CANTERBURY BELL, by Aaron Cox’ A snug little place half-way up a cobbled hill behind the quays and fish market, and the name suited it, the painted words glowing handsome as a gold watch-chain across its front. Old too, creaking old and fairly itching with beetles under the varnish, leaning on one elbow as it were, crab-eyed, slab-stone roofed and bottle-chimneyed, with a good half acre of cellars as my father had once assured me.

It was in the largest of these cellars that cockfights were rumoured to take place, and you didn’t doubt the story after one look at Aaron, for he was very like a fighting cock himself, sleekly smart and perky, with a sharp,

humorous nose and thin, quick hands, both face and hands being abundantly freckled as if he had slept once among fishing nets and been marked by the knots. He always wore a deceptively soft-looking speckled cloth and a fresh white linen shirt without a collar, ruling the roost with an elbowing truculence, his young, handsome wife quiet in subjection, though fretful-lipped, the exact parting in her steel-black hair reminding me of the head of a screw so that I imagined Aaron screwing her everlastingly back into place with a monster driver.

I used to call there every Saturday to buy eggs for my mother. Aaron’s brother kept fowls somewhere out on the marshes, breeding the fighting

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cocks under simple cover. A pull at the bell wire of the side door and Aaron would come hopping, always Aaron as if he were expecting good news:

‘Eggs? Why, certainly, m’son. How many? Come in a minute.’

And I’d follow him across the booming wooden floor into a back parlour dark and sweet as a picked plum and he’d count out the eggs from a large basket into my small one, selecting the biggest, for my father had once saved his licence and he wasn’t the man to forget. There was always a slate beside the basket with the score and market price chalked on it and Aaron would drop a penny or so every time, pocketing the coins jocularly, jingling them before taking a big arrowroot biscuit from a varnished kilderkin and tossing it with an air of apprehension as if a guinea were at stake:

‘Heads or tails?’

I always called heads in my shyness and confusion and Aaron would examine the biscuit carefully:

‘Heads it is! You win. Take care of the eggs.’

Once he filled the basket with eggs no bigger than marbles, staring amazedly when I exclaimed.

‘Good God! ’tis your sight has gone bad, m’boy!’

But I pointed out that the basket looked the same size and so did my thumbnail when compared with the eggs. Grimly I fought his banter, insisting on the smallness of the eggs and at last he grinned:

‘Quite right, m’son. If ye see a

thing and believe ’tis so, stick to it. Don’t let anybody twist your mind for you. Those eggs are small all right. Bet you don’t know what kind of egg they are though’

‘No, but I’ll find out if you’ll give me one.’

He gave me half-a-dozen and when, the next week, I told him they were either the first or last eggs of a hen’s laying season he snapped a finger and added a shilling to the customary biscuit:

‘That’s the style, boy. When you want to find out something never stop till you *have* found it out.’

There was my chance to ask him about his cellars and the cockfights but the shilling had unbalanced me and my tongue kinked at the last moment. But, later, I made the most of opportunity. Entering the parlour for the eggs I saw on the scrubbed table an open box loose-lined with red velvet and in it were four sets of bright steel spurs with neat leather collars sewn to them, two pairs of little leather gloves and a twist of waxed thread. The spurs looked oddly like the talons torn from an eagle with rags of flesh still hanging, looked like the soul of murder, so wickedly shaped and shining were they.

‘What are they for?’

‘Those?’ Aaron smiled, pleased with my innocence, that he should be the one to put a first, right knowledge into my head, handling the spurs delicately: ‘Guess you’re old enough to hold the truth, keep a secret. They’re cock spurs . . . fix ’em so,’ he fitted a spur to his finger, wrapped the leather round

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and wound an imaginary thread, 'and the birds fight'.

'To kill?'

'Aye, that's the idea and they do it like heroes.'

'I'd like to see a fight'.

'You would? Well, so you shall. But it's secret, mind, even from your father.'

'When?'

'Next Saturday morning, eleven o'clock sharp. Shake hands on it. You just ring the bell as usual and then hoof the door twice, hard as you know how, and I's'all know who 'tis. It'll be good fighting, my Needlesmith against m'lord Kinnybrook's Stormchaser, and a dozen other warmish bouts. Big money, no quarter. Pretty! Prettiest thing in the world. Remember that, son. Women are no good to you, just punk and tear your guts, nothing on the straight, all snatch, but a fighting cock's as good as a second heart. So long, now. Not a word, mind.'

I passed his wife in the passage on the way out. Her lip was bleeding where she had bitten it overhard in her mortification. She stared angrily, blaming me for rousing such words in Aaron. Outside, in the street, I had a good look at the door, saw where it had been kicked a thousand times before. I even swung my foot in jubilant pretence of kicking it there and then, then walked sedately home, rich with the secret, my heart swinging high and noisily with the gulls as they circled over the chimneys of the town.

Day followed day slowly and

ungenerously. I avoided sea-shore friends, going often to peer into the windows of back street bookshops, hoping to see a book tied open at a picture of fighting cocks at battle. I bent nails into the shape of spurs and fitted them to my wrists secretly, wishing myself a fighting cock, stabbing desperately, so that my mother, hearing my hissing and braying from the attic playroom, would call a mild remonstrance.

I imagined accidents which might prevent me from arriving at the Canterbury Bell by eleven o'clock, storms, illness, the loss of keys and the breakdown of clocks. I thought I had safeguarded against them all by prayer and charms, but luck avoided me. In those days the boots and shoes of the household were repaired by a journeyman cobbler who came at regular intervals, working in the disused brew-house in a corner of the yard. His name was Will Wouldhave, uncommon and unforgettable as he'd boast, a name honoured the world over for had not a Wouldhave first planned the self-righting lifeboat? I never knew exactly or cared very much since the cobbler could not explain the principle for use in my own wooden boats. A sour, shabby-minded old man, but a good cobbler, carrying his tools from place to place in huge, quarto pockets, his iron foot under one arm and a bend of leather under the other.

On that Saturday morning he arrived long before I was awake and my two pairs of boots, always those most badly in need of repairs, were

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given to him with the rest. Waking to the dulled sound of hammering I quickly guessed the cause and saw pleasure boxed and nailed, opportunity ruined, for I could hardly go to the Canterbury Bell in soft-soled carpet slippers . . . I shouldn't be able to kick the door in the right way even. Half-dressed, I feverishly begged my mother to ask that my boots be repaired first, before the others. The morning was fine – the clouds were like a reflection of apple blossom – and I didn't want to potter indoors. All the week I'd been off colour, to go out now, immediately, would put me right again. Besides, Aaron Cox had asked very specially that I get there before eleven o'clock that day. After all, it was near enough to my birthday to make no difference. Let's call this my birthday and if Wouldhave couldn't do the boots quickly, let them go undone, please.

My mother smiled at my urgency, combed back my forelock with her fingers and went to see Wouldhave. But it seemed that he had no leather stout enough for my boots. In a minute he'd go to the tanner's for some, start work right away. Slowly he went, slow as a noonday shadow, and I shouted to him to hurry but he only scowled and muttered windily.

Fiercely I prowled about the house, searching cupboards for old shoes, appealing again to my mother. Couldn't I wear one pair while he worked at the other? Very gently my mother urged patience, explaining. Wouldhave was cheap and a good workman, though crotchety, she ad-

mitted. He disliked interference and she couldn't afford to offend him by dictating the way of his work. Besides the old, worn soles were already stripped from the boots. Understandingly she gave me an old pistol of my father's to play with but I found no pleasure in the handling of it. All the time I was thinking of Aaron and his fighting cock Needlesmith . . . a queer, exciting name.

Time raced. I could feel each minute humming away. Wouldhave returned to his stool and I went and stood close, tempted to force quick labour with the pistol, to bribe him even with some of my father's tobacco, but I knew quite surely that nothing would make him hurry. God had made him so deliberately, a brake on the impetuous. He had forgotten what it was like to be a boy. There was no eagerness in him, or understanding, nothing but a squinting dourness. What had he to hurry for, after all?; it is only those with something to gain or lose who hurry. I tried to think of something he might not wish to lose but I could think of nothing. I hated him passionately, but my hate was no more to him than a faint smell, not distasteful, but vaguely savoured since he had himself caused it.

Very methodically he soaked leather in a pan of water, hammering at it, shaping it roughly, paring the inner sole smooth to receive it. Next he nailed the new, oak-sweet leather, head and tail and all round the edge, sucking up a handful of tacks from his palm, his tongue regularly thrusting

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one forward between his rusty lips in readiness. A final shaping and glass-papering and the nailing of a toe-plate and I thought all was done. But no, there was still the heel to do.

Grumly I forced myself not to count the chimes of a clock, although I knew quite surely that eleven was struck. I prayed that the cockfighting would be delayed, that the best fight might be left to the last. Explosively I scraped and scratched, but Wouldhave took no more notice of me than if I had been an old coat swinging in a wind.

At last he laid the two boots side by side and I pounced upon them, but he hadn't yet finished:

'I do my work thoroughly,' he grunted maliciously.

May God catch you bending soon, I fumed, watching as he lit a little burner. Unhurriedly he melted and rubbed heelball on the new leather, wasting time on unnecessary perfection. Again he laid the boots together and, afraid that there might still be something else to do to them, I snatched them this time and bolted into the house, pulling them on, demanding a basket from my mother.

Guessing a reason for my anxiety my mother yet did not question, only watched me race away with a dry little smile as if she were remembering young hurries of her own. Galloping noisily, whacking the air with the basket, I swore foolishly, blaming Wouldhave, ill-wishing him with all my heart. A brewer's dray slowed at a corner to allow a dapper little gentleman and his florid manservant to pass.

The drayman saluted and grunted informatively to the boy beside him but not till later did I realize that here was Lord Kinnybrook. As the dray moved on I grabbed the tailboard, hanging on, recovering breath, until a bouncing barrel jarred my fingers. Running again, cornering at speed round a lamp-post, I skated down the cobbled hill towards the Canterbury Bell.

But my belly gulped dismally at sight of the wide-open side door. Aaron, grey and sad, all perkiness gone, was talking to John Flixon, the undertaker, in the dimness of the passage.

'I'm grateful to you, Johnny.'

'Don't worry.' The undertaker patted the red velvet bag under his arm: 'I'll tuck him in with that maid of O'Regan's who died yesterday. A nice grave for both.'

Aaron nodded. He might have been arranging his own funeral. I could feel a broken heart grating on its string.

'So long, Johnny.' He saw me, heard me bewilderedly. 'Too late?' Under-standing after a minute he took the embroidered bag from the undertaker, put his hand into it and drew out a dead, beautiful bird, red and black, marvellously neat and compact even in its limpness. Death had strangely robbed the clipped feathers of their gloss. The head rolled and I saw the punctured skull, a bloody ooze drying on it like a tiny garland of flowers.

'Careful, Aaron,' the undertaker warned, but Aaron quieted him unkindly.

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'The boy's all right.'

'Needlesmith?'

Aaron nodded, bagging the bird again, giving it to the undertaker.

'So long, Johnny.'

I stood glumly, more miserable than I could ever remember being before, not merely disappointed but sick in my veins. A steel spur was working among my thoughts, whistling cold, sketching death. Aaron turned heavily away into the back parlour, drinking neat spirit gulpingly, slumping into a chair. Anxiously I followed:

'How did it happen? I'm sorry I'm late.'

'Just as well, son, just as well.' He scrubbed at his eyes with his hands and spat clumsily: 'It wasn't pretty.'

I could feel the liquor blazing in him, forcing words.

'It wasn't the money, mind,' he said suddenly: 'You understand? It wasn't the money. Money's never worth sweating about. I can't understand it. There'll never be another bird like him.'

'Damned if I can understand it. Sort of thing it's hard to believe. No sense to it. All that pluck and guts wiped out, wasted. A real masterpiece, that's what he was, made for fighting, every bone of him . . . he just couldn't help it; every breath helped his fire. You could see him pondering on it all, working it out. When I breasted him in a mirror I could feel fight rising in him so that he'd damn near burst my hands, trying to show me what he could do. It was pretty good to watch him sparring with the gloves, all pride and

skill, stroke on stroke so quick you couldn't follow except by the effect on the other bird.

'When we'd got a big show coming off I'd talk to him about it and he'd feel my excitement and strut and crackle his wings, sure of himself, more sure than anything else I've ever seen. I'd feed him special stuff, eggs, rhubarb and the finest barley and butter and he'd glow with it, knowing what it was all for. To see him fighting was like seeing God spitting, just as sure as that. Ground him in the pit and he'd stand quivering, like steel in harness, looking things over, all clean and handsome and his eye black and steady.

'And then he'd hop to it. It was like a splash of red-hot metal when they dashed together. Wings crackling and a slashing and darting faster than your eyes could swallow it. A proper scorching and splintering and then old Needlesmith would spark back a bit, watching. He never wasted time and there was never any need to hold a count over any bird he struck for they never got up again. They just drooped and flopped and died. And old Needlesmith strutted at the top of his pride, his head balanced like a snake's, the fighting sweat gone and his mind and feathers all shining. He didn't know what pain or grief was; he'd just strop his beak on my hand when I sucked his wounds and bathed 'em in salt.

'But this time he was flat, no spring in him at all. He tried his best but the Shawlneck got there first. I sort of depended on him; he was

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about the only truly dependable thing I've known, not like women, or men even, no nonsense or twisty thoughts. He was rare and perfect. Can't understand why he failed; can't understand it. Oh hell, what's the use.'

Aaron drank again. I felt a bit sick, full of unexpected knowledge. Reaching suddenly into his pocket Aaron slapped the little velvet-lined case into my hand.

'Here, boy, you take 'em. I shan't want 'em again.'

I looked at the spurs, not knowing what to say. Aaron waved me away. I remembered my basket. My mother would expect eggs even though the world had cracked for Aaron.

'Eggs? By God, that's funny!' He laughed bitterly: 'Eggs?' He jerked a thumb towards the passage where his

wife bustled, smiling crookedly: 'She'll give 'em to you.'

I backed away, gave my basket sulkily to her. How many? I told her grudgingly and she counted them out, not the largest and the price was high. I gave her the money and she locked it away in a new leather purse, opening the door briskly for me. No more arrowroot biscuits or proudness.

'Good-bye,' I called to Aaron, but he didn't hear me. The woman wanted me gone and she hurried me with her knee, sharply. No sooner was I down the step than the door slammed triumphantly. I wanted to spit but my mouth was dry. She was like cold, wet poison, that woman, jealous like them all. All day I remembered her and at last, suddenly, I knew quite surely why Needlesmith had failed.

The Last Whiskey Cup

by Paul Engle

WE have shot the last whiskey cup from the trapper's head
Nailed the last coonskin to the barn, given the buckskin
Shirt to the movies, watched the covered wagon
Roll whitely through the dust of wretched murals
In small-town banks, the ancient Greek acanthus
Framing the Utah trail, the dignity
Of Cornstalk, Pontiac, American Horse
Immortalized in the ads of automobiles,
Chewing tobacco, baking powder
(And in my vision
In the night, in the lonely place of the spirits,
Two men like arrows shot through the sky and talked
Secretly to me in the voice of my ancestors).

America, now, a nervous nigger dancing
To the mighty roll of radio-chanted jazz
On the hollow drum of the world for a few pitched coins,
Through eternity bright with hanging galaxies
Elbows its way.

Yet there are still great dreams
Haunting this land, and I have known men
From Brooklyn Bridge to the Golden Gate who dreamed them:
I recall a section hand spitting tobacco juice
All over a hand-car and saying, 'I've walked track
From Chi to Frisco for thirty years. It's a
Hell of a big country, mister.'

A Negro evangelist
Beating the drum of God from Harlem to Mobile,
With diamonds studding his teeth and a yellow vest, shouting,
'Dis is goin' to be de nex' land of de Lawd, sinners.

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He's zoomin' from heaven in an airplane all silver and gold,
An' Gabriel in a white silk suit's goin' to drive Him
From Buffalo to Birmingham in a fiery Ford,
Honkin' His horn as loud as Judgment Day!
An' crinkly-headed angels with black wings
Savin' repentin' souls on every corner.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

And in Iowa

A farmer husking corn down a mile-long field—
'Best damn corn land in the world, loam a foot deep.
My grandfather came from Ohio to break this land,
And his came from Vermont and back of him they came
Clear from Germany. My family's
Had a hand in buildin' it up. They've watched it grow,
And it ain't done yet.'

In Manhattan under the L

A man with the insomnia of fierce dreams
Walking the restless night away — 'It's a dirty,
Noisy, incredibly ugly, incredibly beautiful,
Don't-give-a-damn, soft-hearted nation.
We're all nervous as a wolf bitch in heat.
We've got to make a noise, if nothing more
Than get drunk and stand on a street corner and yammer.
Yet there's a spirit here, I know, I've felt it
From Boston to Hollywood. It's a strong thing,
Bigger than we know, big as the land, maybe,
If we could see it whole. I think it burns
With the clearness of hardwood fire for those with eyes
Alert and calm enough to find the flame.
It's an awful, crushing land, but, Christ, it's great
To be a portion of it.'

We have shot the last

Shaggy buffalo on the Western plains,
Pre-empted the last free land — Now it is time
(I have known it long in my heart) for this country
To twist a lariat of us and throw it
Over the ocean to ocean flinging land
And flip its loop across the lifted, crashing

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Defiant horns of the wild American spirit
And with a twist around the saddle horn
Drop it to earth, and on its sprawling hide
Burn the clear new world brand that unto men
Shall be a witness of our heritage
Wherever that great untamable breast shall toss
The stars of heaven on its horns and graze
Across the grassy ranges of the world.

Tongues of Men and of Angels

by Malcolm Muggeridge

LONDON empties itself into Hyde Park on Sunday evenings in spring. Strolling up and down pathways, sprawling under trees, lounging in deck-chairs, people watch darkness gently descend. The freshness of the grass exhilarates them – sounds and sweet airs, sounds and sweet airs. They forget themselves, and are blessed, at peace. Sensuality, too diffuse to be restless, dissolves their spirits, and engenders the only kind of mood in which human beings in the mass are tolerable. Even husbands and wives forget their hate, even adolescent lovers forget the urgency of their appetities, even solitary individuals forget their grudges, even you and I forget the pattern whose pieces we are perpetually trying to arrange in such a way that it will signify you and I.

Yet there is a Corner. There has to be a Corner even in Hyde Park on a Sunday evening in spring – Lenin's Corner, Freedom's Corner, Peace's Corner, an infinite variety of known and unknown Gods' Corners. From little platforms, each labelled, words overflow, like cascades of water from fountains; arms beat the air, faces contort, bodies travail and deliver spirit.

A genial negro, spectacled, announces the end of the world, the crack of doom, the judgment day. He begins quietly, hands folded on his belly – thus it was written, thus prophesied, thus calculated. Then the vision smites him. He has seen; yes, he has seen with his own eyes the sun black as sackcloth, the moon rising blood-red, the stars falling on to the earth, the

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heavens departing as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every island and mountain moving out of its place.

As he describes his vision and its portentous consequences, his eyeballs roll, his hands wildly gesticulate, froth trickles from the corners of his mouth 'Where will be then the children of men? — sheep divided from the goats.' It is a home-thrust. His audience wince, become more intent, more compact. A youth in a bowler hat and wide trousers and a double-breasted waistcoat looks nervously on the ground; a patronizing smile freezes on the face of a middle-aged man, fat and rubicund, bald pate glowing in the sunshine.

The negro works up to his climax. His voice begins to intone, to take on a rhythm. Passion fills out his words. He is radiant, sublime. 'The children of men; oh! the children of men round God's throne, like children round their father, a family.' He pauses. His eyes fill with tears, and he beats his breast. 'White men and black men, all one family round their father.' Suddenly, without any warning, he bursts into song, abandons himself to its notes, stands limp and inert with all his vitality concentrated in the richness of his voice. The song rises above all other sounds like a lion's roar above all other sounds in the jungle. His audience seem to be crouching, fearful, at his feet, as though he was God and his little platform a golden throne, as though at any moment the terrible division into sheep and goats might

take place and the horror of eternity come to pass.

Nearby, a hatchet-faced orator chalks 'freedom' on a blackboard, climbs above the blackboard and clears his throat. His voice, when he speaks, is venomous, his mouth cruel, his forehead stormy. Spite has traced out deep wrinkles, gleams and sparkles still within his eyes. 'Friends!' he says. 'Friends' They begin to collect—his friends. They look up, marvelling at the love he bears them; hungry sheep waiting to be fed; innocents ready to be initiated into the mystery he has chalked on his blackboard.

'You think you are free,' he begins pityingly; 'and you are slaves.' Their bondage is heavy upon them. Show us the way, they seem to whisper; and we will follow. 'Yes,' he goes on, spitting out his words, grinding his teeth: 'slaves! Just slaves! And slaves to what?' They are all attention. Show us our tyrant, they seem to say, and we will destroy him. He waits, as though expecting one of them to answer his question. Then, when no answer is forthcoming, shouts triumphantly: 'To the economic system'.

Now the flood-gates of his eloquence are loosed. Now he rains words on to the faces spread out beneath him. Now, like a snake, he hisses out his fury. 'Here is the Bank of England . . .' He sweeps it away with a gesture; and his audience, a stormy mob, pour into it, hang the Governor, the Vice-Governors, the cashiers, overturn the safes, make a great bonfire of bonds

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and securities, leave not one stone standing on another. 'Take rent . . .' He shakes his fist in rent's face. He demolishes rent. He tears rent into shreds and tramples on the pieces. His audience watch him delightedly, and shed no tears over the destruction of such a tyrant. 'And interest . . .' They feel interest like shackles round their ankles. It is a dungeon deep underground in whose melancholy darkness they are fated to pass their lives. Oh! if they could only get at interest, feel their fingers round its throat, crush the life out of it so that it was never again seen in the world!

'And then,' he shrieks, 'you talk of freedom.' The very word is a crucifixion to him. It tears his body to pieces, leaves him pale and exhausted, consumes him like a flame. He leans forward, agonized; and his audience look up with awe at this Christ who erects his own cross, drives the nails into his own feet and hands; at this Christ self-crucified.

The plaintive strains of a hymn disturb his passion:

'Pull for the shore, sailor,
Pull for the shore. . . .'

A harmonium accompanies the singing, and an elderly man leads it. He is placarded – on the front, 'I Know That My Redeemer Liveth'; on the back, 'Washed In The Blood of the Lamb.' From between these placards, a butterfly collar and a dishevelled head protrude. The head is capped with a bowler, beneath whose rim grey

hair straggles; and a grey walrus moustache overhangs the mouth. He sings gruffly, making up in spirited gestures for the limitations of his voice. The faithful stand round him, a little compact band, singing their hymn amidst a multitude of ribald heathen.

When the hymn is finished, the elderly man takes off his bowler and reads from the Bible. The words fall from his lips with exquisite relish, 'I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?' He rolls each word in his mouth to extract its full quality. 'For all his days are sorrows, and his travail griefs; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night.' He reads what he knows, what he believes, 'For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom and knowledge and joy; and to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up.'

His heart is uplifted. He pounds on his front placard in a frenzy of exhilaration. 'I know that my redeemer liveth – I know, I know.' The faithful nod their heads. 'We know, we know.' He reaches round at his back placard and hammers at it with his fists. 'Washed, oh! washed clean,' the faithful chant. He dances between his placards, pouring out a stream of disjointed eloquence.

Exhausted at last, his hair matted with sweat, his cheeks flushed, he pauses, and the hymn is resumed. Now his bowler is a golden crown and the placards fine raiment. Now he is leading the faithful to paradise, sees in the distance, across the desert of this world, domes and spires of the

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heavenly city. 'We are few,' he exults, 'but our reward will be very great.' Pearly gates open, divine anthems sound, and he and the faithful step forward to receive the gift of everlasting joy for which they have qualified.

Beneath a red flag a communist orates. He is lean and elegant, his gestures studied and his words incisive, like a man working to a pattern. His head is smooth and oval as an egg, and his features expressionless. He looks round contemptuously at his fellow orators, as though to say, They dope you with music and eloquence, delude you and trick you, whereas I offer you ungarnished truth. He throws truth down in bare, incisive sentences, like a man throwing bones to a pack of dogs. His fists remain clenched, and are pointed either inward at his breast or upward at the sky. His attitude is take it or leave it, throw off your chains or hug them or pretend that their rattle is tuneful, my business is to show you the way.

He shows them the way. To hell with this, and to hell with that. As he speaks, Hyde Park becomes a desert, just a waste of space. He empties it of trees and grass and people. There is nothing but his words echoing through emptiness, like a dry wind echoing through the Sahara. His audience shudder, but are fascinated. This might be a way – to destroy instead of hoping, to purify with fire instead of with the blood of the lamb, to level out eternity now instead of waiting for salvation hereafter.

'All that impedes . . .' What impedes? they ask themselves – King and Lords and Bishops and owners of property of every sort and description. They offer him them ungrudgingly. Take them, they seem to say, with our blessing. But he is not satisfied. More – he wants more. They look round for more to give him, look into their own souls, make a miscellaneous collection of hopes and appetites and ambitions. Do these suffice? they seem to ask. He is inexorable. Are we, they wonder, to tear out our very hearts? Are we to point inwards the blade of our discontent as he points inwards his clenched fists, saving our lives by losing them, achieving perfection by ceasing to be? He nods. 'You impede. Everyone and everything impedes.' Now his fists are lifted towards the sky, face irradiated with white heat, eyes remote as stars. They slink off, for they have great possessions – themselves. It is what he wanted – to clear a space, to go on making his studied gestures and speaking his incisive words with, for audience, only himself making studied gestures and speaking incisive words. In such circumstances alone the words seem real, triumphant.

A cheerful, round-faced Irishman in a black soft hat with an immense brim attracts a large crowd. His platform is unclassified. He is a free-lance, an amateur, without any message, one who spends his Sunday evenings orating only because it amuses him to do so, a jester, a satirist who loves to ridicule the follies of mankind to its very face.

Tongues of Men and of Angels

Any subject suits him. He runs gaily from the Disarmament Conference to the Test Match, from birth-control to socialism. The audience make suggestions. 'What about Jews?' they shout, or, 'Up de Valera!' Always he responds. His range is wide.

'Look at trams,' he says gaily. 'You all travel in trams. Perhaps there's a tram-conductor here this evening. I wish there was. Think of him ringing his bell – ting-a-ling-ling – and punching tickets all day long. What is it? – bloody civilization. Think of the people crushing in the tram to go to work and crushing in it to come back from work. Think of their work – ringing telephone bells – ting-a-ling-ling – and writing on bits of paper. What is it? bloody civilization. Think of soldiers drilling and firing machine-guns – rat-a-tat-tat, – and of the Lord Mayor and King George V and Ramsay MacDonald. What is it? bloody civilization. They say there won't be any more wars, that no one'll fight. Don't you believe it. Of course we'll all fight. And why? because of bloody civilization.'

The audience are delighted. 'You're a dirty-minded traitor,' a fellow-Irishman shouts irrelevantly at the orator. He spreads out his hands. 'What did I tell you? bloody civilization.' The fellow-Irishman pushes his way forward. 'Who pays you to hand out insults? That's what I'd like to know?' The audience are impressed. After all, who does pay him? What's his game? What's he after?

'I'll tell you who pays me,' the orator says. 'Stalin pays me, two quid a

week. Only I don't like to talk about it for fear (looking at his interrupter) some other Irishman should offer to do it for thirty bob.' The interrupter is crushed. He can only growl, 'It's a lie. It's a damned lie.' No one heeds him; and the orator proceeds, 'All the talk's nowadays about plans and organization. They want to plan this and organize that. What I want to know is, can they organize. . . .'

Three Jews mournfully erect a platform. One of them mounts it to complain of the wrongs of his people; the other two listen. He is shaggy and unkempt, with swollen features, eyes and mouth large and indeterminate, voice mellow with despair. 'We ask only for justice,' he says, taking justice in his stride, unaware of the enormity of his request. 'We ask only to be allowed to live without interference,' he goes on, as though being allowed to live was a trifle, like being allowed to die. 'Our wrongs cry out for vengeance, but we are a peace-loving people and nourish no thoughts of vengeance; only, in the name of civilization, we ask that our wrongs may be righted and our enemies made to feel that, by behaving as they have, they forfeit the right to be regarded as civilized Europeans.' He is slow and oppressive. Words meander out of his vast mouth like a river meandering indolently over a swamp.

When he is spent, another of the three takes his place; a small Jew, slightly deformed, with broad shoulders and long arms, and a face that is sharp

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and thin as a knife. His performance is keener, more precise, more intellectual. 'We won't buy from them. . . .' He sees idle shipping, ledgers recording no profits, factories choked with their own production. 'Our scientists work elsewhere. . . .' He sees them, white-coated, in laboratories, inventing perhaps a gas that will some day be blown in the faces of those who cast them forth; perhaps a new and more deadly explosive; perhaps a bacillus. 'The best artists, the best writers and musicians and actors and actresses . . .' He knows about art. He frequents concerts, the British Museum, literary gatherings; understands the sensuality of words and sounds and shapes, and the rhythm of fashion and mood; knows the moment for this kind of sensuality and that; can attune himself perfectly to the ebb and flow of taste. He chuckles when he thinks of the philistinism of his enemies.

The last of the three is bearded, eyes glowing, lips folded sedately over his beard. He speaks to the future about the past, unaware of any present. Suffering, as he describes it, is an ecstasy, and each humiliation a triumph. Oppression, he seems to say, has been the privilege of our people, the sign that we were indeed chosen

of God, since it has knit us together and enabled us to keep our identity. We decay in prosperity, go after vain gods, blaspheme our genius; it requires exile in Babylon, a Hitler or a Goering, to bring us back to the paths of righteousness. We have to thank Hitler for forcing thousands of Jews who had become ashamed of their race to acknowledge it. We owe him a deep debt of gratitude

His voice rises and falls peacefully as he describes century after century of suffering, of wandering, of restlessness, each phase ending in a return to an original inspiration, always kept alive if only by one prophet. And the end of it all? For God's chosen people there can only be one end, 'My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.'

Now it is almost dark. The crowds in Hyde Park melt away; platforms are folded up and removed; the red flag is furled, and the faithful and the heathen depart together. Soon there is nothing except darkness, and lovers lying in the grass, and stars, and the three Jews complaining of the wrongs of their people.

The Bloody Babe

Passages from a Dictator's Autobiography

by George Barker

AT my nativity the mayor of the township in which my birth had taken place issued a formal proclamation that for a period not exceeding three months and of not less than one month no persons, either of married or unmarried status, were to indulge in the increase of their species. The personal consummation of the nation had so inoppugnably occurred in my advent, that the more or less immediate birth of further persons appeared irrelevant, lustful, shameful, and irreverent. Carnivals to celebrate the future emancipation of the race – instrumented and augmented and patently promised by my existence – were inaugurated in the fields surrounding the township. The mayor, who saw fit to bear my heavily clothed but tiny body about the streets in his own arms, was never seen, from the day of my birth henceforward, either in public or in private, wearing any but his official robes. I have no recollection of meddling embarrassingly with his gold chains. On no occasion, so far as I am aware, did I incommode his worship by inappropriate or undignified behaviour when borne in his arms. The

height of the festivity occurred when, following a dithyrambic recital by the townspeople of the national song, my diminutive body was elevated by the mayor as he stood on his dais, at which the crowds burst into uproarious applause, and I, though no more than a week or two of age, grasped an open penknife in my small fist and shook it with a gesture presaging later freedom for my people. From that day forward, the symbol of my native town has been of a robust child brandishing by both hands and feet, four swords.

At the age of one, I was discovered by my delighted parents in the back garden of our house despatching with a pellet-gun the three hundred chickens which were housed there. The bodies of some eighty of them were stacked into a large mound in the centre of the garden, from which sort of salient I was observed to shoot no less than thirty birds in one minute. (This incident is related as it perhaps explains the present national sport of my countrymen: need I mention the now world-famous *Wring-a-wring-a-chick-chick?*)

The following four years taught me much with regard to the handling of

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humans in times of stress. The people of a neighbouring town, finding that their stores of food were inexplicably declining, accused the people of my native town of nocturnal purloining. This accusation naturally enraged the spirited people, who retorted that certainly they had appropriated food-stuffs from their neighbours, but for no reason other than because they required them. This, they continued, comprised good enough reason for persons such as themselves to offer such persons as their accusers. Inevitably this situation led to an intermittent and circumstantial warfare, of guerilla kind. Men of one town, meeting their slights on the road connecting the towns, perpetrated cutting and undesirable remarks, sometimes even shouting. Their opponents would retaliate by delivering such articles as they carried with a great force at their defamers' heads. A scuffle would ensue, in which, not infrequently, heads and limbs were broken. Finally both parties would retire to their bases claiming success.

This indecisive and rather volatile type of conflict soon demanded the intervention of such a person as myself, even allowing for the apparent disparity of my juniority. By banding together every man able of bearing a stick – a particularly inclusive regulation which mobilized even the septuagenarians – it was possible, within a very few days of the ninth indecisive meeting of small parties, for me to march from the outskirts of our town behind a force of some seven hundred armed men, all, by

reason of speeches I had delivered and pamphlets I had promulgated, fired and ardently set on reducing our enemies to the level of our beasts and lowest servants.

My childish figure, armed to the teeth and past, supplied an extreme, though martial, stimulus to my followers. Exhorting them wildly to engagement, I was for the moment quite carried away by the power of my oratory, and found myself, I have no knowledge how, in the van of the attack. Our enemies, sighting me, clad as I was, a babe in arms, stood as though struck to stone. Seizing their advantage, my forces hurled themselves upon the defenders, and, charging past me, carried the outer fortalices. I was plucked from the ground by the mayor, who remained in the rear, and carried, triumphantly, into the town. It was from this relatively minor engagement, in which I am proud to relate the whole of the enemy to a man perished, that I learned the prime maxim of the ruler: *Victory is an adroit usage of the sword of accident.*

At fourteen I received an invitation to the Emperor's Court, which I accepted with alacrity. Public generosity was conscripted to fit myself and a retinue of eighty body servants or guards, in costumes of startling and grandiose extravagance. Being at this time a youth of conspicuous appearance, my ensemble when arrayed in the brilliant trapping or uniform which had been provided for me delighted the townsmen to such a degree that it was agreed by consensus to confer upon me

The Bloody Babe

the title of Marshal of my native Township. The device of a babe brandishing four swords was painted upon the vehicles in which I intended to travel, and affixed to the arms with which my attendants were plentifully provided. And before long, amid the uproarious acclamation of some thousand persons, my train moved off, myself prominently seated at the head.

After journeying for two days, during which every town and village I entered donated me an ovation worthy – perhaps surpassing that – of the Emperor himself, the retinue arrived at the capital. Cordons of the inhabitants, having heard of our approach, lined the principal streets, which were hung with coloured representations of my ensigns. Cries of, Welcome, Emancipator of our Race! echoed throughout the squares, and sword-blades like palm leaves were strewn along my path. In the forum of the town, the inhabitants had assembled in an orderly fashion to request my acceptance of a municipal present or token of loyalty. Seated upon an ornate and thronelike chair, I was approached by the chief townspeople, one of whom, after lengthily kneeling, stepped towards me with the present in his hands. Erecting myself, I extended my hand, to withdraw it immediately. The object was a crucifix. At my action the audience burst into applause, which the donator seemed to sense as a sign, for he immediately changed his attitude from one of servility to a military rigidity. With a swift movement he grasped the upper length of the cross

and unsheathed the blade of a sword. Turning it inward towards himself he presented the hilt to my hand. The crowd burst into deafening cheers, crying out, ‘Hail, General of Gods, Marshal of the Martial, Caesar of Seizers!’

My fame had outsped my journey to the capital. Recountings of my infant exploits filled every mouth, and in search of superlatives with which to describe my person, a committee of scholars was deputed to spend two weeks in research through the national libraries.

By the evening of my presentation to his majesty the city hummed like a huge arena with excitement and anticipation. The Emperor – who, I was aware, had alienated the respect and patriotism of his peoples by a continual introduction of foreign affectations both into his personal behaviour and into the conducting of the country – contemplated the reception with some misgiving. The applause which my entrance into the palace grounds caused among the assembled concourse entirely deafened the minor shout which arose when the Emperor appeared on the steps to receive me.

Suddenly an excited disturbance shook the crowd, and a portion of it, some hundred and fifty persons, broke through the lines of guards, sweeping them completely aside, rushed towards the steps upon which I stood with the Emperor, and, bearing an object hidden from my sight in their midst, surrounded me, cheering wildly. The

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object they carried was pushed to the front, and placed on the ground at my feet. I concealed a smile. It was the Emperor's only child, its arms and legs severed, and in their stumps had been thrust, as in my emblem, four swords.

During the next three days 8,472,109 persons perished. The Emperor suffered a sanguinary dethronement, the ambassadors of over one hundred nations were quietly slaughtered in their private residences, and countless thousands of alien journalists, writers, photographers, scholars, artists, tourists, and non-descripts were deprived of their capacity to interfere by imprisonment, sterilization, and simple execution. By precipitate action all internal dissent was, within a week of my assumption of power, entirely extirpated. By forceful confiscation of all instruments of propagandistic operation the mind and the will of the populace was brought under my personal control. By the dissemination of speeches, books, pamphlets, photographs, statues, coerced statistics, and cinematographs, the general fire against the deposed monarch and his followers – in persons, happily, deceased – was sustained at its highest pitch; and by a similar process of dissemination the public accord with my succession increased and intensified. Fêtes proceeded in the majority of cities, accompanied by a burning of all alien material, literature, contraceptives, etc. Several score of effigies of the late Emperor were burnt within a week of his death.

The crown, which I had at once thrust upon me, proved upon investigation to have been imported three hundred years previously from an adjacent country. On learning of this, the monarchy was dissolved. In its place was instituted the individual dictatorship, as of national growth and fructification. *To every differing country falls its earned rule.*

At the age of seventeen, that is, having governed the country for three years, an assassination was attempted. By reason of the substitute engaged to portray my person in public, calamity was prevented, but my understudy unhappily died from his wounds. The assassin, endeavouring to shoot his escape, was cornered by the guard attending my public figure. He was immediately removed to prison, where, within the hour, he expired from the effects produced by the insertion of a pneumatic air-pump into the anus, and the vigorous inflation thereof.

Following this upset, a quiet possessed the country for seven days. This comprises the longest period when nothing has transpired within our borders. On the eighth day, the inhabitants of a contiguous country accused my people of belligerency. The war which ensued still shakes the windows of the palace, as the opposing Dictator, now the only survivor of *his* race, expends his final shell in an attempt to lower the Banner which raggedly dominates even my capital's ruins. . . .

Mademoiselle Rose

by J. B. Morton

HE was a big red-faced man with a loud voice, and of middle age; a man of the mountains, with thick dark hair, a bull-neck and strong shoulders. He had been married that afternoon, and was giving a wedding-feast in the hotel at Vallorbe. When I entered the dining-room, the party, which consisted of some twenty men and women, had begun. The soup was finished, and great dishes of jugged hare were being carried in. The conversation was already general, and everybody was talking at once; everybody, that is, except the demure lady in black who was later addressed as 'Mademoiselle Rose'. The bride, who sat next to her husband, in the middle of the table, was by many years his junior; a large, thick-hipped girl with a foolish face almost as red as his. A fillet, with little flowers worked on it, bound her sandy-coloured hair, and she wielded her clumsy great hands as though they did not belong to her. Her voice was coarse and husky, and she giggled perpetually. At the top of the table sat the wit of the party, a young man with neatly brushed hair, and dressed in a clerk's suit of black material, less rough than the black clothes of the other men. I guessed him to be an actor of sorts in his spare time. He brought into this rustic company the air of the towns, and was very sure of himself. Perhaps he was from Lons-le-Saunier or St. Claude, or another of the towns of the Jura. His repartee kept the company in yells of laughter, and when he could not think of a witticism, he made large eyes at the girls, and pressed his hand to his heart, and sighed desperately. He had on his right hand a plump matron with beautifully dressed brown hair, and on his left an ugly girl with a hooked nose and a squint. Between mouthfuls he would drop his fork and seize this girl's hand and mutter passionately, which made her shrug her shoulders and bark at him good-naturedly. A man from Vaulion, further along the table, talked of Vaulion and its affairs whenever there was a lull in the conversation, until the wit demolished him with a single phrase. The most striking among the remainder of the guests were two very handsome young men, evidently brothers. They were shy, and hardly spoke at all. I could imagine them at the saw-mill up in the hills. The girls were plain, and of the healthy peasant type, and one of them smacked her

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lips repeatedly, and cried to anyone who cared to listen, 'Oh, the good wine! Taste me this wine! Oh, the good wine!' An infantryman from the 7th Corps at Besançon, sitting next to her, evidently desired to sing already, but was not encouraged.

While the meal proceeded the bridegroom was full of the tenderest care for his wife. Though half his attention was given to the rowdy conversation in his neighbourhood, the other half was given ungrudgingly to her. He would help her to dainty morsels, and bend over to whisper in her weather-beaten ear. Nor did he stint the wine, which she drank in great draughts, like a horse. The man on the other side of her was elderly, with grey hair and twinkling eyes, and he evidently regarded it as his privilege to look after her and see to her comfort when the husband's attention was temporarily distracted. She had opposite to her Mademoiselle Rose, whom I could not place. She was not more than thirty, but her staid bearing and her grave face made her seem older. There was something of the governess about her, and once when the bridegroom spilled wine dangerously near his lady's white dress, she spoke sharply, as a sister might. She ate precisely, and was neat in her movements, and nobody, not even the wit, took liberties with her. Once, when she smiled at the bride, I caught myself thinking that she might be almost pretty if she took the trouble. For the smile lighted up her blue eyes and warmed her face for a moment. But

her lips seemed to resist the smile as long as possible.

I ate slowly on purpose, because I knew that there would be fun later on, but I took the precaution of going over from my little table to the husband, and asking him if I was in the way, and if he would prefer that I should eat somewhere else. He turned on me his big happy face, and begged me not to inconvenience myself. He had forgotten my presence within a minute, and was beaming at his wife.

There was an outbreak of health-drinking all round the table, but the formal toast of the happy pair was given by the wit, who began by ruffling his hair, swallowing painfully, and tugging at his collar, as though he were very nervous. He made a short speech in a weak, gloomy voice. He said that he would congratulate the husband, had he not the misfortune of knowing the wife so well, and that only his intimate knowledge of the husband prevented him from congratulating the wife. 'It is a dreadful thing,' he said, 'A dreadful thing; and we can only hope that no harm will come of it. Poor souls! Poor souls!' And he sobbed, and wiped his eyes, and sat down amid howls of delight. Even Mademoiselle Rose was smiling ruefully.

Then the husband lifted up his voice for silence, and, ignoring the toast, announced that Louise would sing. Louise was one of the plainest of the girls, but she had a clear little voice. Sitting back in her chair she sang a stupid song with an interminable refrain, in which everybody joined,

Mademoiselle Rose

beating their hands on the table. Even Mademoiselle Rose sang, and beat her hand precisely upon the table, lowering her eyes as though discovered in a compromising situation. Louise then pointed vigorously at another girl, who after protesting and tittering, shouted her song – a very short one, without a refrain. The bridegroom's face was ruddier by this time, and his gigantic laugh drowned all other sounds, when the girl who had sung the second song pointed at Mademoiselle Rose.

But Mademoiselle Rose had herself well in hand. She showed no surprise, and made no pretence of shyness or incompetence. In her gentle way she looked round the table, waiting for silence, and bowed her head a moment to collect her words. Then she stood up quietly, and in a serene voice, well modulated, delivered a conventional recitation, accompanied by conventional gestures. It was about a small girl who fed the birds in the winter with her own food, and so fell ill, and died, and was taken by the angels to Heaven, where the good St. Gabriel gave her the birds of Heaven to sing for her night and morning. This was applauded heartily, but less violently than the preceding items, and Mademoiselle Rose sat down again, and folded her hands in front of her, and smiled at the bride with tight lips. At a sign from her neighbour she pointed her finger at the wit, who pretended she had transfixed his heart with an arrow. Then he bounded to his feet, and delivered a humorous recitation, in which he acted the parts of an old man,

a young man and a girl. He worked himself into a lather of perspiration, and was loudly cheered.

The wit pointed at the hook-nosed girl beside him. She sat rigid in her chair, and made a valiant attempt to sing a song. She had no voice and she had forgotten the words, and as the volume of laughter increased, she raised her eyebrows, shook her head and gave it up. When the noise subsided she leaned forward and pointed down the table at the husband who cried, 'Why, certainly! Why not? You shall hear something, I promise you.'

He took a draught of his red wine, patted his wife on the shoulder, and began to sing in a light and very pure tenor voice. I do not know what the song was which he had chosen. I had never heard it before, and have never heard it since. From the way he sang it, I do not think he understood it, having perhaps had it by heart since early boyhood. It went to a slow measure, and it said that love is like the swallow, coming and going, but never staying for long. The snows melt, said the song, and the people moving about the streets hear the sound of the torrent, and tell each other that spring is come, and that with spring comes young love. But between the opening and shutting of an eye, the air is darkened again, and the wind blows, and the snow falls, and the swallow is gone. But, said the song, he returns, and love returns. And here the tune changed and quickened, and the singer tapped the floor with his foot and sang more loudly; then ended abruptly, and

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sat back in his chair stroking his chin, and glancing sideways at his wife, with a beaming smile of happiness, which she returned.

I had long finished my meal, and as the room was unbearably stuffy and full of smoke, I went outside into the street, and walked up and down, listening to the gusts of laughter, and the voices singing in chorus. The half-moon hung over the Mont d'Or, and the sky was crowded with stars. I went and sat down outside a café, and drank. Presently there were sounds of departure down the street. In twos and threes the guests were coming out of the hotel. The bride and groom drove off in a dilapidated trap, with a hood over it, the younger members of the party pursuing them and shouting after them, and the others cheering in the roadway outside the hotel. Then they began to go to their homes in twos and threes. I sat on for a while,

with drink before me, and was about to finish it and go to my bed when I heard slow footsteps coming from the direction of the hotel. I said to myself that the wedding party had probably made a match for somebody. So I sat where I was for a moment and presently there emerged from the shadows cast by the buildings on either side a man and a woman walking arm-in-arm. They were not speaking, nor were they looking at each other, but there was a communion of silence. All that there was to say was understood perfectly, and there was no need for saying it. They passed within a few feet of me, both of them looking at the moon; his head and her head slightly leaning towards each other, their arms linked, their hands clasped. I saw their faces clearly for a moment before they passed on up the street, and recognized the wit and Mademoiselle Rose.

Defeatist Song

by Herbert Palmer

I'LL be going away soon
To wash in a blue lagoon,
I'll be going away soon
Ten million miles behind the moon,

Where the black crow may not reign
And the grey owl dare not feign,
Where the living heart glows red
And the dead are wholesomely dead.

I'll be going away soon
Far, far behind the moon,
Where Excalibur can be healed
And Truth is a conquering shield,

Where every lie is pinned
Like a weasel in the wind,
Where the great Gamekeeper sits
Shooting down the crooked wits.

I'll be going away soon
To a land behind the moon,
Where unbroken shines the blade
And the heart is undismayed,

Where God's Honour is not sold
For a scrap of wizened gold,
Where the faithful hands are bless'd
And the cheated are at rest.

Magnie's Hatty

by John Cullen

MAGNIE JAMIESON was the factor of Mr. Abernethy, who owned the village and the land surrounding it. His work would take him for miles over the hills, which stretched treeless and desolate from one side of the island to the other. There were few cottages on the hills, the soil there being too poor to maintain a croft. The villages straggled round the rocky coast, and the inhabitants took what they could from the soil and the sea. From the hills Magnie could see the row of white cottages surrounded by the diminutive fields of cabbage, corn, and potatoes, the shrill green of the young corn showing up brilliantly against the grey stone of the hill behind. Between the crofts and the hill the ground was scored by the black lines of the peat dykes.

Magnie was conscious of his loneliness amongst all this rock and water, and used to take an old pony about with him for company. Hatty was an uncouth-looking beast, with a thick wad of hair peeling from her back and rump. She did no work, but ambled alongside her master without even a halter. Often dogs snapped at her heels in the villages, but she walked on sedately, like a schoolmistress pretend-

ing not to notice the little boys who imitate some peculiarity in her manner. Hatty was her master's only confidant and companion.

Magnie was fifty years old, slight but still very powerful in spite of his recent illness. He was as brown as a Spaniard, and wore small golden earrings. In his youth he had sailed a small boat which had won prizes in several regattas. He had been a celebrated lover in a country where neither men nor women have much time to make love. The men go out to the fishing. The women and girls work in the croft; their hands are knotted and large, and their clothes are those their mothers have worn. The winds and storms dry their faces into wrinkles before they are thirty, and the teeth of even the young girls are decayed. But at about the age of eighteen the girls seem to reach a marvellous beauty which, like the northern summer, lasts hardly long enough for you to be aware of it. Magnie had spent his lesiure sailing his boat and making love. The men made love slowly, like great beasts, so that it was often years before they got to the bed, but Magnie was in at the window before another man had contrived to meet the girl a few

Magnie's Hatty

times on the hill. The girls put on their finery for him and risked becoming outcasts for his sake, a dreadful risk where the society is so small, and where, in spite of the solitude, a girl cannot hide herself and begin a new life among strangers. They knew, with animal instinct, their fate: wrinkles, and early decay, with no compensating remission of their toil. Life was cruel to them but unlike the poor of big towns they had no opportunity of envying a more fortunate class, they were not conscious of social inequalities, but clung to their lives fiercely and derived a certain hard-grained satisfaction from their religion. Magnie's strength was famous, and he was bold. He had the pick of the islands, and now had four brawny sons in the villages along the coast.

It was late in the afternoon when he got to the top of Hioxness. He stood looking out to sea, with his hands on his hips. After a while he turned round and saw Hatty standing in a doze a little way down the hill.

'Come up here,' he called.

Hatty looked up.

'Come along up here.'

Hatty slowly began to move, her head jerking up and down as she pulled her legs up after her. Magnie sat on a large stone and looked out to sea again. He heard the pony's hooves clicking against the small stones on the path. Then the clicking stopped.

'Come up here, my lady. I want thee up here,' he called out again. He watched the eider ducks along the

shore, until he felt Hatty's breath on his neck.

'So we're here again,' he said, rubbing Hatty's nose. 'Stand back a wee.'

He took off his coat, folded it up carefully, and put it on a ledge of rock. Then he spat on his hands and rubbed them together until the spittle made them sticky. Hatty stood with her neck hanging down. She watched Magnie, and as she watched her head sank further down, until she hitched it up with a snuffle.

He planted his feet on either side of the stone and bent down, feeling for a grip on the edges. Then his body slowly stiffened and his head went back. For half a minute he did not move. Then he suddenly relaxed and, breathing deeply, changed his position. Again he stiffened as he tried to lift the stone. This time his breath came in quick gasps, and he strained at the stone until he suddenly knelt on it, panting, and looking down at his hands. When he had regained his breath he slowly drew his tongue round the edge of his lips and whispered to himself 'Almighty God!'

The pony backed a few paces as he got up and pulled off his jersey. He threw it behind him and folded his arms, breathing slowly and deliberately. Under the jersey he had on only a vest, so that his arms and the muscles of his neck were bare.

'Hatty, here lass,' he said softly when he was ready. The pony hesitated sniffed at the stones, and slowly slouched up. Magnie spat on his hands

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again, and bent over the stone. He changed his hold twice before he found a grip that satisfied him, then he strained, his breath whistling through the hairs of his nostrils. The great muscles on his shoulders were bunched up so that he seemed to dwindle away beneath them. Drops of sweat fell from the end of his nose. At last he moaned and started to pull at the stone with rapid tugs. It lifted a little at one side, and in his excitement Magnie put both his hands to the one side and tugged again and again. Each time the stone shifted slightly.

'God, God, God, let me move it, just this once, dear God, let me move it just once more. Jesus, just once, and I'll never touch it again,' he sobbed, but he could not lift it from the ground. He tried again, with his hands on either side, his head thrust back, and his eyes wide open and staring upwards. Then he gave in and tumbled onto the grass, his whole body working to get breath. Hatty watched everything from under her shaggy mane, with her head lowered.

It was getting dark as Magnie came down the hill. He could hear a boatload of crofters coming home from the kirk. It was Sunday, the air was calm, for the wind had dropped towards sundown. They were singing hymns, and their voices filled the dark hollow between the hills. Heard in the darkness, filtered through the sea sounds, the singing was beautiful.

Magnie paused on the hill to listen to them. As religion was their

consolation, his strength was his. He had never married, and now he was getting past the pleasures of his youth. His boat, turned bottom upwards, served as a hen-coop outside his cottage. He lived alone with Hatty, despised by the village because he refused to become part of it, and because he had been a successful lover.

Every year he had paid a visit to the stone at Hioxness, and every year, after he had lifted it up to his chest, he had been able to face the enemy with an inner confidence in his own virility. Deep in himself he knew that the people, the sea, and the brutal conditions of the life in the islands could not beat him. Now, for the first time since that summer evening many years ago when, as a young man just back from his first voyage, he had lifted the stone and staggered proudly with it right up to the edge of the cliff, his strength had failed him.

The singing went on, seeming to transform the night itself into sadness. The men tugged at their oars, the women stood up stiffly at the back of the boat with shawls over their heads.

'Till we meet,

Till we meet at Jesus' feet'

they sang. That was their consolation. They loved the dead with a far more passionate tenderness than the living.

To Magnie, lying by the stone on Hioxness, the enemy seemed to have no menace that evening. They seemed to him simple and lovable, friends to be made by casual words of greeting and help with peats or stray sheep. Their singing drew all his protections,

Magnie's Hatty

from him, till he felt utterly forsaken. For the first time he felt that his loneliness was a punishment. They were no longer the mean peasants he had known, but men and women who had eaten their bread with tears, humble people, who could express the bitter experience of their lives in beauty. They sang to him, tempting him from the stone and his defeat. Magnie started down the hill to meet them.

The boat touched the shore, and the men waded into the water carrying the women to dry land. As Magnus approached them he heard two of the men quarrelling over a piece of wood they had found. The note of passionate exaltation which darkness and the stillness of the night had given to their voices broke into the harsh argument of the two men, the scrape of the boat's keel on the stones, and the shrill laughter of the women as they were carried pick-a-back to the shore. As he came up to them, holding Hatty by the forelock, one of the women said 'Hsst! Here's yon black deevil Magnie Jamie-son wi' his auld mare.'

The men stopped quarrelling and they all looked round at Magnie as he stood smiling at them shyly from the first stones of the beach. 'Shall ye be needin' ony help wi' the boat?' he asked gently.

One of the women burst out into a high-pitched scream of laughter, which suddenly stopped.

'Get oot o' here,' she said in a voice cold with hatred.

Magnie started to walk down the shore towards them, but a stone hit

him full in the temple, and he dropped bleeding onto the ground. Hatty reared, whinnying with alarm, and galloped off into the dark, her wind breaking as she ran.

In the village post office, which also served as a general store and public-house, the men were gathered round a small peat fire. They held their mugs in their hands and drank sparingly, for money was scarce. A woman with a shawl over her head was buying bread at the counter, and they watched her, fascinated by this simple act of exchange. She went out, and they turned their faces to the fire again.

'I hear Magnie and his Hatty is doon at Scarvoe measurin' oot Jimmy's croft,' said one of the men.

'Aye, he's here a'right. He's gettin' tae be a puir body the noo. He'll no' last mony years, eh Tammy?'

'The Lord has given, the Lord shall tak' awa', said Tammy.

One man guffawed.

'The Lord gave him a muckle handfu' when we were wearing our fingers tae the bone tryin' tae keep a roof over an honest home, though,' said the first speaker. Again they fell silent, envy working in their dull brains like whisky.

'Did ye hear o' the time Magnie had tae gae tae the hospital tae hae his eyes operated?' asked Geordie.

'Na, what happent tae Magnie?'

'When he wis told he maun gae, there wis the greatest distress this side o' Ronaldswick, all for leaving yon

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brocken-doorn critter Hatty. An' he wis awa' wi' the great cry that if he didna come back, Maister Abernethy wis tae shoot her an' pit her in a decent grave. An' when the steamer wis at the pier he wis awa' over the hill talking tae the auld mare afore Mistress Galbraith wis fairly doon the gangway.'

Tammy spat into the fire.

'D'ye mind the great lie he told us, aboot they doctors?' he said.

'Na, tell us it,' said one of the men.

'He cam here wi' a great gab aboot this hospital an' the wonders o' it. "Tammy," says he, "I cam roond fae the chloroform, an' by God," says he, "there I saw ma twa eyen staring at me fae a plate. Wasna yon a wonder?" says he.'

'It's no age that improves him, the wizened auld liar,' said Geordie. 'An' what way should such a man be getting ony joy oot o' an auld horse even? He's had his share, an' may the Lord hae mercy on his soul, for it's nae long afore he'll be at the place.'

Tammy sipped his beer. He sucked his long moustache with satisfaction, and again they thought in the silence of the room. Then the door opened and Magnie came in, leaving Hatty standing outside in the rain.

'Evening boys,' he said. 'It's an awfu' night tae leave the puir critter oot. Hae ony o' ye an auld bag I can pit around her?'

The men sat still and did not reply.

'An' for what is this great heathen love for a horse?' asked Geordie at last.

'An' why for not? Ye're no' denying me tae tak a horse along o' me are ye?'

'There's nae cause tae be caring for the auld beast like a bairn.'

'Aye, an' when there's plenty o' yer ain wid be glad o' a bite o' bread tae pit in their mouths,' added Tammy.

'There's yer auld wife eyeing ye through the windy, Tammy. Ye'd best be off tae yer bed,' said Magnie.

He still had a dirty piece of rag tied round the cut on his head. Going up to the counter, he ordered a glass of brandy and swallowed it at a gulp. Then he went out into the rain.

When Magnie had gone they decided to kill his pony. Slowly, with patient elaboration, they set about their plan. They would steal Hatty from the byre when Magnie was in his boat going over to Jimmy Tulloch's. They would lead her up to the edge of the cliff, and push her over. The crudeness of the scheme appealed to them. It was sufficiently brutal, and if Magnie brought the law on them, the pony would cost little. They went home and recounted the plan to their households with solemn satisfaction. The old women leaning over the fire shook their heads, but the wives and children applauded them with malicious glee.

Next day four men went to Magnie's byre and took out Hatty. The pony was standing up to her knees in dung, and looked round as they came, her eyes shining like blue glass in the darkness. They led her to the

Magnie's Hatty

edge of the cliff and pushed her over. Hatty lay on the stones at the bottom and only once tried to get up.

Magnie finished measuring Jimmy Tulloch's land. He came through the village and on his way noticed that talk ceased as he passed. Heads bobbed down from the windows. On his way up the street he saw Robbie, his son, pulled roughly inside the cottage by his mother's arm. He quickened his pace till he got home. The fire was nearly out, and he set to work coaxing a flame. When the fire was burning brightly he sat down with his pipe in his mouth and read an old newspaper. After a few minutes he dropped the paper and listened. He could hear no

noise in the byre where Hatty usually stamped and snorted.

'Hatty!' he called.

He ran through the open door of the byre and stumbled into its foetid gloom.

'Hatty!' he called again. Then he realized the covert amusement of the village. He walked slowly to the cliff and saw Hatty lying at the foot.

In the evening he rowed round to the pony's body. The tide was washing round her stiff legs; one eye and half the head had been battered in. For half an hour Magnie rolled large stones over the body. Then he returned to his cottage.

The Beginning

by Mervyn Lagden

THERE were so many animals in the wood that the ground echoed with unseen feet and every leaf stirred with hidden life underneath. Motion would be in the fox swaying across the fields, fear in the vanishing scuts under the hedgerows, passion in the throaty call of a bird, and pity in the soft eyes of a squirrel contemplating the nut between its fingers. But the real life of the wood was underground. It teemed, it crawled, it sweated from the pores of the earth in an insistent stream.

‘Come under and see,’ it cried. ‘We live and are the beginning of you who walk.’

Creeping in under the moss, the sound of myriad voices lapped round. Delicate ground spiders waved transparent legs, free of earth, like tiny emotions stammering their way out of chaos. Tremendous worms, which could never have had a beginning, churned a way to the surface and ironed out invisible wrinkles in the mould. Minute creatures, which might one day fly or swim, oozed between bosky fragments and mated without stop. In the roots of the primroses small wiry serpents nested, ready to be withdrawn with the root.

The persistent creeping suggested a fearful pregnancy and at the same time exuded death. From under the ground, the tremulous leaves, and the mould blanket, stole out an aroma of dying. The body became one with earth atoms and was eaten by the tireless worms.

This penetration of death into the living did not content itself with the ground. It rose into the bodies of animals and the figures of men.

In a weltering red field a mass of ewes stood swathed in muddy fleeces, their withers and buttocks straddling in the sticky loam. Lambs toppled on hoofs clogged out of shape with mud. The pen hedged in the pangs of birth, yet each sheep, as it lay down, yielded to the ground folding its woollen limbs as if in death.

Two fields away, men ploughing had no separate identity. In the half distance the shepherd, walking away from the fold, drew his feet slowly out of the earth as if they had no volition of their own and could not be parted from the soil. The sway of his limbs was in the drive of the rain-cloud overhead, and his waist and thighs undulated with the field against which he was outlined. At any moment he

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would sink into the brown crust to which he had already resigned himself.

In these surroundings sat an old couple, hugging to them what was left of life within the four walls of their cottage. The rhythmical wobble of the old man's chin and head, his fingers as he felt for snuff, seemed to be finishing out a tune that was too difficult for him. One bandaged leg had already entered into decay and was slowly drawing him with it under the stone floor. Only the bright white side-whiskers fringing his pink cheeks and the shrill blue of his eyes explained the manhood still there. His glances bestowed on food and drink the interest once given to other things.

His wife, a network of wrinkles over her face proclaiming her shrivelled body, had become, though she still stood, a portion of the background. Her hips and the framework of her limbs had passed with the action of living into the walls and, through them, to earth. Her hands waved with faint movements like old boughs, and the few steps she took were pushed out of her by the flag-stones – more alive than she.

Cupped between the two old people was a bowl of mutual experience. Their thoughts, escaped for ever from them, were trapped in the limits of each other. When had they stopped thinking? Sometime, long ago, before old age had covered their bodies. They did not see each other as they were – the clock of their minds had stopped

with the hands still pointing to midday instead of evening.

She saw him as the active male who slouched off day after day to work, content to curl his crook round the ewes' grey legs and draw out lamb after lamb into the air. He was still looking down red with pride and anxiety at their first child. For her, lying weakly on the bed, the baby in his arms had made a completed picture of her life. She had been thankful to him for what he had given her without any consciousness of giving. Her other children had been welcome, but none had given her the same intense happiness. She was a cat, too delighted to leave its basket of kittens for more than a second; a bitch with a bellyful of puppies whose legs grew strong too quickly; a mare whose eyes could never leave the young foal coming to her to be licked and nuzzled. Even when her eldest son grew up she had not been able to part with the possessiveness he roused in her. To stroke his neck or to have him ill and at her mercy, restored him at once to her as a baby cradled into her side.

Although she did not know it, time had stopped for her husband at the same moment – when work and fatherhood had been fused. Toil in the fields, tired thighs driving their muscles on past weariness, and the toil of getting children, were intermingled. The day his child was born he had stayed working in a field near his cottage till a neighbour rushed out to call him. He always remembered what he had been doing, chopping fiercely at stakes and

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twisting the hard, obstinate withies along in between till, bit by bit, a close basketwork of hedgerow grew up under his fingers. He had worked so furiously that his hands had been torn and blood had stained the white spear-heads of the withies for weeks after.

When he went in, he had looked everywhere but at the bed. He had noticed the strong light coming through the window, and the straight legs of the chairs with shaped feet he had never seen before. Kneeling by the bed he had kept his head bent towards the floor, his eyes travelling up and down the trailing sheet like a strange land. He found his fingers clutching a wisp of torn bark from the hedge, and there was blood on the outside of his hand. His mind said over and over again the words of the only hymn he knew by heart –

‘While shepherds watched their
flocks by night,
All seated on the ground’ –

weighing the accents of the music. He knew that he grew out of the woman on the bed, like the sapling he so often cut down out of the earthbed. Over her, in her, round her his legs towered up, his manhood springing from the safe feeding soil.

In a daze of prayer he had looked into his wife’s country eyes, accepting her labour like a happy worn-out animal.

Time before and after this had been dimmed. The other events in his memory had blended into pleasant streams of life. Hundreds of evenings,

when the taste and smell of his pipe by the fire had been good, made one continuous evening. The spring mornings, when he went up the hillside with his sacking over his shoulders and his crook in his hands, had telescoped into one polished morning – like an apple on which his hand rested. Nights in the inn with steaming clothes, the reek of beer and sawdust and the buzz of cheerful voices, had steeped themselves into one brew which he could now drink at a mouthful. The bickerings and triumphs of his children and grandchildren were a long strip of pattern rather than single recollections. Accidents and love-affairs and quarrels dove-tailed into each other – like the dusk closing up the difference between open country and woodland.

But now through the closing walls of his ears and the stupor of the past he heard voices. He saw his wife stir reluctantly as if wrenched out of a dream. The son who had been his first child came into the cottage followed by a tall woman with an almost new born baby, and by three other children. He could not see them distinctly; they were shapes blowing in from the outside. The children were daffodils, bobbing on their stalks; primroses with upturned faces. The dew from the ground hung over all the party, making it unreal. Out of the cobweb of his life hung these spiders, shaking the frail net, unable to break it but stretching it painfully.

The old woman, kissed boisterously by her son and daughter, was repelled by their firm cheeks and lips. She

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resented them except as memories as she drooped forward over the table edge, head resting on nerveless hands. The feel of her own cheek was so different. It was herself. loose, hanging, meagre. She did not want the radiancy and bloom any more.

Voices eddied round her. The new baby had come to see them both. He weighed eight pounds – a monster. He was to be christened in a week and they would call him after his grandfather. Hands lifted the kettle she found so heavy, and filled it; feet clattered up and down the floor she found so endless; the door which took her time to reach kept opening and shutting as one or the other went out or came in. Presently she heard the suck suck of a baby's lips, so distinct and so close it made her think it was at her own breast. She had no strength to look and see.

The hot tea was in her throat, reviving her muscles and lifting the cold wave in her brain. Cup in hand, she looked wonderingly round at all the people sitting there till her eyes came to rest on the baby. It was lying on the middle of its mother's lap as if it had just been born. It was brightest pink and its fist was rubbed into its wet, dribbling mouth – turned eternally upwards. The old man was bending forward over it, prodding gently at it with his finger while his knees shook with the effort and his toothless mouth smiled.

She too bent. Wizenod figures,

concentrated on the new life. Alone out of their children round them, they recognized the baby. Together they picked him out of their thoughts, where he had been all the time. They nodded over him, two ashy grasses stooped over a green shoot, doddering in the wind and unconscious of larger growths. Neither knew what the other felt. They were too close to eternity; but, out of the haze behind them, stepped the picture of the baby, framed so that even their eyes could see it.

After what might have been hours of happy apathy, broken into only by an occasional shrill voice or a scraping chair, all was quiet. The old couple were alone again. The door had closed – shut in on them, and the silence in the cottage faded into the silence in their ears. One each side of the fire, they sat on into the dark; safe in four walls, draining down into the stone floor, drawn out into the night.

Passing by the cottage, a man paused and listened. There was no sound. The walls grew up into the pressure of the darkness like a shell holding its dried seeds. As he brushed the stone sides, the man felt the whole building would crumble away into the ground. From round the garden the cold worms and slugs and the teeming insects clamoured to get in. Eating life from the earth was waiting to gnaw into the old flesh and bone and make it one again with the beginning.

Story of a Flight

by Cecil Day Lewis

From *A Time to Dance*

SING we the two lieutenants, Parer and M'Intosh,
After the War wishing to hie them home to Australia,
Planned they would take a high way, a hazardous crazy air-way:
Death their foregone conclusion, a flight headlong to failure,
We said. For no silver posh
Plane was their pigeon, no dandy dancer quick-stepping through heaven,
But a craft of obsolete design, a condemned D.H. nine;
Sold for a song it was, patched up though to write an heroic
Line across the world as it reeled on its obstinate stoic
Course to that southern haven.

On January 8, 1920, their curveting wheels kissed
England good-bye. Over Hounslow huddled in morning mist
They rose and circled like buzzards while we rubbed our sleepy eyes:
Like a bird scarce-fledged they flew, whose flying hours are few —
Still dear is the nest but deeper its desire unto the skies —
And they left us to our sleeping.
They felt earth's warning tug on their wings: vain to advance
Asking a thoroughfare through the angers of the air
On so flimsy a frame: but they pulled up her nose and the earth went
sloping
Away, and they aimed for France.

Fog first, a wet blanket, a killjoy, the primrose-of-morning's blight,
Blotting out the dimpled sea, the ample welcome of land,
The gay glance from the bright

Story of a Flight

Cliff-face behind, snaring the sky with treachery, sneering
At hope's loss of height. But they charged it, flying blind;
They took a compass-bearing against that dealer of doubt,
As a saint when the field of vision is fogged gloriously steels
His spirit against the taunter of air, the elusive taunter:
They climbed to win a way out,
Then downward dared till the moody waves snarled at their wheels.

Landing at last near Conteville, who had skimmed the crest of oblivion,
They could not rest, but rose and flew on to Paris, and there
Trivially were delayed – a defective petrol feed –
Three days: a time hung heavy on
Hand and heart, till they leapt again to the upper air,
Their element, their lover, their angel antagonist.
Would have taken a fall without fame, but the sinewy framework the
wrist
Of steel the panting engine wrestled well: and they went
South while the going was good, as a swallow that guide nor goad
Needs on his sunny scent.

At Lyons the petrol pump failed again, and forty-eight hours
They chafed to be off, the haughty champions whose breathing-space
Was an horizon span and the four winds their fan.
Over Italy's shores
A reverse, the oil ran out and cursing they turned about
Losing a hundred miles to find a landing-place.
Not a coast for a castaway this, no even chance of alighting
On sward or wind-smooth sand:
A hundred miles without pressure they flew, the engine fighting
For breath, and its heart nearly burst before they dropped to land.

And now the earth they had spurned rose up against them in anger,
Tier upon tier it towered, the terrible Apennines:
No sanctuary there for wings, nor flares nor landing-lines,
No hope of floor and hangar.

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Yet those ice-tipped spears that disputed the passage set spurs
To their two hundred and forty horse power; grimly they gained
Altitude, though the hand of heaven was heavy upon them,
The downdraught from the mountains: though desperate eddies spun
them

Like a coin, yet unkindly tossed their luck came uppermost
And mastery remained.

Air was all ambushes round them, was avalanche earthquake
Quicksand, a funnel deep as doom, till climbing steep
They crawled like a fly up the face of perpendicular night
And levelled, finding a break
At fourteen thousand feet. Here earth is shorn from sight:
Deadweight a darkness hangs on their eyelids, and they bruise
Their eyes against a void: vindictive the cold airs close
Down like a trap of steel and numb them from head to heel;
Yet they kept an even keel,
For their spirit reached forward and took the controls while their fingers
froze.

They had not heard the last of death. When the mountains were passed,
He raised another crest, the long crescendo of pain
Kindled to climax, the plane
Took fire. Alone in the sky with the breath of their enemy
Hot in their face they fought: from three thousand feet they tilted
Over, side-slipped away – a trick for an ace, a race
And running duel with death: flame streamed out behind,
A crimson scarf of, as life-blood out of a wound, but the wind
Of their downfall staunch'd it; death wilted,
Lagged and died out in smoke – he could not stay their pace.

A lull for a while. The powers of hell rallied their legions.
On Parer now fell the stress of the flight; for the plane had been bumped,
Buffeted, thrashed by the air almost beyond repair:
But he tinkered and coaxed, and they limped
Over the Adriatic on into warmer regions.
Erratic their course to Athens, to Crete: coolly they rode her

Story of a Flight

Like a tired horse at the water-jumps, they jockeyed her over seas,
Till they came at last to a land whose dynasties of sand
Had seen Alexander, Napoleon, many a straddling invader,
But never none like these.

England to Cairo, a joy-ride, a forty-hour journey at most,
Had cost them forty-four days. What centuried strata of life
Fuelled the fire that haled them to heaven, the power that held them
Aloft? For their plane was a laugh,
A patch, brittle as matchstick, a bubble, a lift for a ghost:
Bolts always coming loose of propeller, cylinder, bearer;
Instruments faulty; filter, magneto, each strut unsound.
Yet after four days, though we swore she never could leave the ground,
We saw her in headstrong haste diminish towards the east –
That makeshift, mad sky-farer.

Aimed they now for Baghdad, unwritten in air's annals
A voyage. But theirs the fate all flights of logic to refute,
Who obeyed no average law, who buoyed the viewless channels
Of sky with a courage steadfast, luminous. Safe they crossed
Sinai's desert, and daring
The Nejd, the unneighbourly waste of Arabia, yet higher soaring
(Final a fall there for birds of passage, limed and lost
In the shifty sand's embrace) all day they strove to climb
Through stormy rain: but they felt her shorten her stride and falter,
And they fell at evening time.

Slept that night beside their machine, and the next morning
Raider Arabs appeared reckoning this stranded bird
A gift: like cobras they struck, and their gliding shadows athwart
The sand were all the warning.
But the aeronauts, knowing iron the coinage here, had brought
Mills bombs and revolvers, and M'Intosh held them off
While Parer fought for life –
A spark, the mechanic's right answer, and finally wrought
A miracle, for the dumb engine spoke and they rose
Convulsively out of the clutch of the desert, the clench of their foes,

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Orchestrate this theme, artificer-poet. Imagine
The roll, crackling percussion, quickening tempo of engine
For a start: the sound as they soar, an octave-upward slur
Scale of sky ascending:
Hours-held note of level flight, a beat unhurried,
Sustaining undertone of movement never-ending:
Wind shrill on the ailerons, flutes and fifes in a flurry
Devilish when they dive, plucking of tense stays.
These hardly heard it, who were the voice, the heavenly air
That sings above always.

We have seen the extremes, the burning, the freezing, the outward face
Of their exploit; heroic peaks, tumbling-to-zero depressions:
Little our graph can show, the line they traced through space,
Of the heart's passionate patience.
How soft drifts of sleep piled on their senses deep
And they dug themselves out often: how the plane was a weight that
hung
And swung on their aching nerve; how din drilled through the skull
And sight sickened – so slow earth filtered past below.
Yet nerve failed never, heart clung
To height, and the brain kept its course and the hand its skill.

Baghdad renewed a propeller damaged in desert. Arid
Baluchistan spared them that brought down and spoiled with thirst
Armies of Alexander. To Karachi they were carried
On cloud-back: fragile as tinder their plane, but the winds were tender
Now to their need, and nursed
Them along till teeming India made room for them to alight
Wilting her wings, the sweltering suns had moulted her bright
Plumage, rotten with rain
The fabric: but they packed her with iron washers and tacked her
Together, good for an hour, and took the air again.

Feats for a hundred flights, they were prodigal of: a fairest
Now to tell – how they foiled death when the engine failed
Above the Irrawaddy, over close-woven forest.

Story of a Flight

What shoals for a pilot there, what a snarled passage and dark
Shelves down to doom and grip
Of green! But look, balanced superbly, quick off the mark
Swooping like centre three-quarter whose impetus storms a gap –
Defenders routed, rooted their feet, and their arms are mown
Aside, that high or low aim at his overthrow –
M'Intosh touched her down.

And they picked her up out of it somehow and put her at the air, a
Sorry hack for such steeplechasing, to leap the sky.
'We'll fly this bloody crate till it falls to bits at our feet,'
Said the mechanic Parer.
And at Moulmein soon they crashed; and the plane by their spirit's high
Tension long pinned, girded and guarded from dissolution,
Fell to bits at their feet. Wrecked was the undercarriage,
Radiator cracked, in pieces, compasses crocked;
Fallen all to confusion.
Their winged hope was a heap of scrap, but unsplintered their courage.

Six weeks they worked in sun-glare and jungle damps, assembling
Fragments to make airworthy what was worth not its weight in air.
As a surgeon, grafter of skin, as a setter of bones tumbling
Apart, they had power to repair
This good for naught but the grave: they livened her engine and gave
Fuselage faith to rise rejuvenated from ruin.
Went with them stowaways, not knowing what hazard they flew in –
Bear-cubs, a baby alligator, lizards and snakes galore;
Mascots maybe, for the plane though twice she was floored again
Always came up for more.

Till they came to the pitiless mountains of Timor. Yet these, untamed,
Not timorous, against the gradient and Niagara of air they climbed
Scarce-skimming the summits; and over the shark-toothed Timor Sea
Lost their bearings, but shirked not the odds, the deaths that lurked
A million to one on their trail:

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They reached out to the horizon and plucked their destiny.
On for eight hours they flew blindfold against the unknown,
And the oil began to fail
And their flying spirit waned – one pint of petrol remained
When the land stood up to meet them and they came into their own.

Southward still to Melbourne, the bourn of their flight, they pressed
Till at last near Culcairn, like a last fretted leaf
Falling from brave autumn into earth's breast,
D.H. nine, their friend that had seen them to the end,
Gave up her airy life.
The Southern Cross was splendid above the spot where she fell,
The end of her rainbow curve over our weeping day:
And the flyers – glad to be home, unharmed by that dizzy fall,
Dazed as the dead awoken from death, stepped out of the broken
Body and went away.

Coleridge's Poetical Technique

A Study

by Benjamin Gilbert Brooks

I

THE difficulty with Coleridge is that his creative work presents itself to us normally as so many scattered fragments whose spiritual unity has completely vanished. We feel like the readers of some of Gertrude Stein's 'portraits': everything is there – all the needless details are sketched in with irrelevant exuberance – but the essential figure, the subject of the writing, is left blank – a tantalizing and unfilled space. And the reader is challenged to create this central figure himself in his own imagination.

I believe that, in fact, in Coleridge's poetry there is such a definite unity of spirit and indeed of purpose: not, of course, a purpose always comprehensible and visible to the writer himself, but one in pursuit of which the unconscious power in his mind evolved qualities and tendencies which make his work what it is. And further, I believe that these qualities and tendencies can be shown to have clarified and strengthened themselves as time went on. In their light some

of his 'greatest' poems (commonly so accepted) place themselves as the products of but a temporary stage in his development, and are full of the defects of an immaturity and an uncertainty he was to outgrow. Unfortunately, Coleridge himself was one of the least perceptive of men, where the meaning of his own genius was concerned, and, though his note-books show him to be profoundly interested in technique, he continually failed (through the lack of perception) to canalize his genius and exploit himself duly.

It will be seen that we are dealing with an interesting example of a writer who makes a false start by a superficial affectation of originality: and who afterwards, returning on himself and resuming a line of development that has, perhaps, previously seemed to him too close to conventional tradition, becomes more truly and profoundly himself. It is very difficult and baffling to a poet to have to deal with this whole problem. The call for freshness of style, idiom and method is so insistent: and because the style,

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idiom and method of one's first literary decade are necessarily different from those of all preceding decades – it is hard to accept the fact that one is sinking one's 'puling', but distinctive individuality in a kind of 'herd' eccentricity, which will ultimately be known for what it is – the negation of a true individuality.

Two types of poetical exercise which Coleridge used extensively early in his career were the Ode and the Blank Verse Conversational Poem. Both of them did something for his art both, however, were definitely 'false starts'. In neither field was he to discover his real originality (whether this be assumed to be what it is in the accepted view, or whether it be what I hope to show it more truly to have been), though the second proved the more suitable breeding-ground for the typically Coleridgian atmosphere and subject matter. The actual forging of the weapon which he was to use when the main business of life appeared is to be sought in other and (for the moment) less hopeful directions.

II

It was with the Odes that, in his own day, Coleridge showed himself at his most dashing Modern. One must remember that the 1790–1810 period resembled both the Renaissance and our present time in an acute awareness of its own modernity, which enabled writers to patronize the immediately preceding epochs as 'old-fogeyish'. The

Odes of course looked back to Gray and his school technically and yet, with the pompous immaturity of the New Age, Coleridge determined that the literary tools created in the Classical calm of the post-Augustan world should be made to subserve the immediacy demanded of up-to-date Modern Man. There is the pedantic care and the detailed (almost lapidary) constructive dexterity of Gray (in intention, at least, though with a woeful appearance of 'slapdash' about the results) – but this is devoted, not to the logically evolved emotional or poetical 'progress' of his predecessors, but to the proclamation of the hopes and passions of the Libertarian, Unitarian enthusiast, the man spied on and persecuted by the authorities as a danger to Church and State – in short, Modern Man of 1797–8.

The theory of the Ode collapses completely under the strain. The first one, that *To the Departing Year* (1796), was obviously meant to be a regular Pindaric, but with the fifth stanza the scheme fades out and we have something with more, but only little more, rhythmical justification than those of poor 'cousin Swift' – and certainly far less than those of Dryden. Another 'modern' touch! – the confusion of the 'genres'; he introduces material usually reserved for the more serious kinds of satire, giving one a slightly comic sidelight on Coleridge as a momentary link between Churchill and Shelley. In its attempt to weave contemporaneity into the fabric of enduring poetry, journalistically selected inci-

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dents being brought forward as a kind of symbolic imagery, this poem has its affinity with certain of W. H. Auden's Odes. As any sort of poetry it is poor stuff. One may speculate, in passing, on what perverse motive led to the concealment of the perfectly regular and consistent stanza-form of *France* (1798) under such a wildly varied rearrangement of lines. The eye and the ear seem at cross purposes. In length and structure, the stanza resembles that of Collins's *Ode on the Superstitions in the Highlands*. There is power, but not yet typical power. The texture is fine and firm: and the utterance has the calm and dignified tone of great rhetoric. In this, and in the nature of its inspiration, it indicates the lines of development of the impassioned political ode which carries on, through Shelley, Swinburne and Meredith to – I suppose – in our own day, Kipling.

Four years later was written *The Ode to Dejection*, Coleridge's last experiment and only (even partial) success in the irregular Pindaric form. Its resemblance to the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* is not more than superficial. The latter develops imaginatively an abstract case: which we know, indeed, to be the poet's own experience – but which remains, in intention and in essence, abstract: and the philosophical theory expounded on this basis is presented as universally valid. Coleridge develops this theme in a completely fresh way; and this is very important, as showing the movement of Coleridge's mind and indicating the unity of his work. Its basis is psycho-

logical. The subject of the poem is the poet's own mind and, in his insistence on Joy – 'inner Joy' – as the foundation of all real poetical experience – and the pathos of Joy's departure under the heavy travails of his life, and the resulting suspension of his 'shaping spirit of Imagination' – the 'Ens' of the *Biographia Literaria* – he only re-asserts his philosophic position that the subjective world is the only true world. The failure is not in the emotion, but in the fact that he discusses his problem rather than expresses it. At his greatest, the psychology is deducible, not merely, as here, quotable.

III

It was with what he called the 'conversational poems' that Coleridge first found expression for the simpler, more appealing side of his nature: a certain equable pleasure in the surface texture of life: an easy, good-humoured urbanity which reminds one that the friend of Lamb and the commoner at Christ's Hospital was more at home in the society of his fellows than was the craggy and mountain-bred Wordsworth. Though the latter here and there descends to sincerely personal domestic felicity, one feels, with Coleridge, that the man's whole being really blossomed comfortably in this mood and that somehow or other the tense, strange, perverse and wild intellect with which he had been gifted was glad to be lulled for a short period in these calmer joys. It is a mood in which Coleridge

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is almost Classical in an Eighteenth-century way, though his looser association of mental images shows the Romantic influence. He produces on a small scale in these poems something of the 'farrago' effect which is perhaps the first impression which contemporaries had of the Horace of the *Satires* and which his own contemporaries had of that fine flower of English urbanity and sentiment *The Task*.

It is in 1795, with the *Eolian Harp*, that the style first appears. The blank verse, as ever, is easy, unemphatic, limpid and natural, continuing thus the tradition of his predecessor in 'domestic' poetry. Here we have the indolent countryside suggested, a hint of passion for philosophical speculation, which is checked by the plain, simple religious feeling of the poet's wife. *This Lime Tree Bower my Prison*, written in 1797, and thought fit by the Editorial Committee (that is, 'W.W.') for inclusion in the *Lyrical Ballads*, always raises in one's mind a shock of amazement that when Pater complained of Wordsworth's alleged failure to tackle the really test case of 'nature poetry', namely the poetry of the normal, peaceful, rural landscape of Southern England, he should not have noticed that Coleridge did precisely that in these poems, and that he proves Wordsworth's case in the process. One finds here and in *Frost at Midnight*, not vividness and creative energy or evocation, but the virtues more typical of prose – Coleridge's contribution, perhaps, to what he called the 'middle

style' between prose and poetry – a style that nowadays more often adorns the pages of the novelist-poet. The central themes too – wife, friend and child! – are all very domestic and intimate: a new kind of sentiment that had hitherto found no expression, apart from dramatic situation, in England and yet has persisted through Tennyson to our own 'Georgians'.

The Nightingale is the most sprightly of these poems, though the comedy of its attack on Milton's epithet of 'melancholy' is somewhat damped by Coleridge's apologetic nervousness about his audience. Here, after he has allowed himself the licence of sarcasm at the expense of the 'towny' people to whom alone the nightingale is melancholy, there follows the beautiful description of the bird's song and the tale of young Hartley's responsiveness to the joyous influence of Nature in the most 'Modern' 1798 style. With this insistence on Joy, Coleridge, of course, touches the major problems of poetry. He knows, with Keats and Shelley, that to be seduced by melancholy is a sin: but he has to struggle harder than they to escape it. Here, in a moment of triumph, he seems to achieve an equable and healthy maturity beyond, perhaps (in the eye of an unsympathetic critic) below their reach.

The later blank verse poems are effective but not significant. The theme of *The Picture: or the Lover's Resolution* (1802) has something of the arch gentility of Tennyson's early *English Idylls*, to which, no doubt, it points. In fact, this personal and

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perfectly sincere mood of Coleridge's has probably much to answer for in the way it beckoned later poets (with their peculiar and novel audiences to consider) into what are to us the more distasteful aspects of Victorianism. The poem's strength depends on its humorous handling of the once very solemnly held theories of the healing influence of Nature (possibly seen in more comic perspective through the absence or estrangement from their High Priest): an impression emphasized by the choice bombast (reminiscent of Cowper on the cucumber) of Love's expulsion from the woods. There is almost a kind of mock recantation of the 'new' ideas in thus subjecting them to such pedestrian and almost conventional treatment: as though, if the flood of new thought (outside himself) had not carried him on, Coleridge might have subsided into a blandly humorous, lightsome eighteenth-century poetling.

Neither does this nor *The Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni* (a not unpleasing exercise in descriptive rhetoric on the Thompsonian model) nor the last poem of the series *To W. Wordsworth*, written on the latter's recitation of the earlier version of *The Prelude*, offer any new road of advance. Fine as is the last-named, it shows, with its resolution, momentarily sincere, but, in the ultimate issue, false and unreal, that Coleridge, though he had already discovered and entered upon the path of his own final and most original development, was yet painfully unaware of the fact, and was still

hankering after the massive, architectonically-conceived 'opus' which it was no part of his real personality to produce.

IV

What this was can only be ascertained by a return to his earlier work and a study of the process of literary development by which his passion for mastery of technique enabled him to explore more truly the nature of his genius. Politics, Philosophy and man were interesting material: but he was to discover by his own experience that the poet's business is with words, the interplay and caress of words, alone. He himself says in his *Biographia Literaria*, in 1817 (no doubt with Shakespeare and Milton in his mind and with who knows what directing influence on the deepening meditations of the young Keats) that the first sign of a great poet is his exuberant interest in the wielding of language, and that other matters will only eventually enrich and weight this language out of his growing maturity of mind.

The best starting-point is provided by *Songs of the Pixies*, 1793, a set of poems, very fresh in many respects – with the freshness of Blake's *Poetical Sketches*, with which technically they may be compared. In both, the author is exploiting the various models to hand, though in Coleridge's case more naively and perhaps more uncomprehendingly: certainly with a less fundamental understanding of what is good

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and what is bad. The 'Classical' influence, in the bad sense, is, as may be judged from earlier indications, that of Gray (was it his evil effect on Coleridge that made Wordsworth so viciously and so unfairly attack him in the *Preface*? – for to himself he was no danger) – and it is seen in sections 3 and 4. Here we have examples of most of the vices of the School – pointless personification (l.31), the use of awkward Latinisms like 'unfrequent' (l.31) and the reference to the 'youthful bard'. The new poetical period was only just being ushered in, so that the bad influences of the new School do not appear as yet, but the choice of models shows a return to the great and pure masters of English poetry.

First, there is the reminiscence of Shakespearean lyric in section 1: this, of course, is suggested by the subject, and Coleridge's memories of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then comes Milton – the Milton of the octosyllabic style – with the general tone of Italianate pastoral which is hinted at in section 2. And finally in sections 5 and 7 we have Coleridge's reaction to Collins. As a matter of fact, he, as well as Wordsworth, may be regarded as the successor of Collins in many respects – his limpid style, with its bright water-colourish splendours, the irregularity and uncertainty of the poetical movement in his more ambitious odes – in varying degrees, all are found influencing the development of Coleridge; who may be considered, from this point of view, as electing the path of Collins, as the more fruitful, in

opposition to the barrenness of rhetoric into which the more lapidary Gray led his followers. The only 'pure Coleridge' in the poem is the description of the River Otter in section 6. Here we have a touch of remarkable and characteristic visual imagery (l.72) and the pleasantness of landscape (ll.83–88) which we find later in the blank verse poems.

V

With *The Ancient Mariner* Coleridge's genius is suddenly aflame. The mental shock that led to such a volcanic eruption can scarcely be guessed at. The circumstances, with Wordsworth's queer but understandable failure to appreciate the power of the work, Coleridge's still more inexplicable failure to realize the meaning of what he had done, and his strangely quiescent attitude in the face of his friend's denigration, are most mysterious: and one can only wonder at the stupendous outpouring of spirit – its almost uncritical rush of good and bad.

For we must face the fact that there is much in the poem that is undeniably bad, blasphemy though it be to say so. Those who, with Arthur Symonds, would elevate it, with two or three of Coleridge's other poems, into the supreme place in English Literature have always failed to take into account (they may privately, but they will not publicly) the moments of falsity which necessarily mar its perfection. I find these, practically all, in the survival of

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certain elements from the unreal, artificial Romanticism of the eighteenth century. Something of the unreal, artificial Romanticism of the nineteenth century is here, too, but it is used freshly, and for the first time, and with an honest psychological basis, so that it is not felt as a blemish, as the other is.

First of all comes the simple-minded (but, with Coleridge, perfectly sincere) moral purpose. The whole poem is seen at the end to be nothing more than a tract against cruelty to animals, developed in the most childish manner. The fact that this is not made clear till quite late is a bad sign. Such hints as are given early are not sufficiently emphasized: and are only noticed on looking back. How different from *Christabel*! It is an amazing trait in the great men of the Romantic period that, with all their passion for profound truth in literature, they failed to see through the conventional 'moral' and gave the sanction of their splendour to this trashy type of work, so that the journeymen of the succeeding age, if they could resemble them in nothing else, were proud to resemble them in that. There is, moreover, the pitiful makeweight of the eighteenth-century 'Hermit', the 'savage' gentleman who lived in an artificially maintained wilderness in the 'grotts' of men of taste and *vertu*, and who inhabits the poetry of Parnell, Gray and Goldsmith. There is, too, just a little false phrasing, which is difficult to understand in a sensitive ear like that of Coleridge. This occurs

more especially near the end of the poem: (l.411) 'thy soft response renewing' (l.497) 'no voice they did impart', and (l.619) the Mariner 'whose beard with age is hoar'.

The interest in magic, I think, must also be classed as a bastard romanticism, though it may be argued that Coleridge uses it with the same psychological intention as Shakespeare in *Macbeth*. I am inclined to place it nearer to the *Mysteries of Udolpho* and the apologetic Scott than to the true magic, which is the incantation of words, and which Coleridge possessed in abundance. His use of the ballad metre, among the many benefits it conferred upon him, induced him to adopt (and to excuse himself for adopting) new falsities of diction – 'I wist', 'I wot', 'uprist', 'well aday' and 'kirk'. And, though Coleridge has the privilege of precedence, the Ancient Mariner, haunted by a sense of sin, is really only an early version of the typically Byronic hero – possibly inherited by Byron indirectly through Scott's *Roderick*. There is more truth in the humility of Coleridge's hero, and the glorification of the type by Byron is, of course, in the falsest tradition of nineteenth-century Romanticism. But the fascination of the evil-doer, which reaches through to Shelley (obsessed as he is with wandering, haunted heroes, Ahasuerus, and others) and Poe and Baudelaire, and the whole host of the Decadents, starts with Coleridge, here. And this is, perhaps, partly the origin of the enthusiasm of the 'Eighteen-Nineties' (embodied in Arthur Symonds

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and George Moore) for this poetry, as 'Pure Poetry'.

The good qualities of the newly dawning period which find expression in the poem take their rise to some extent in the choice of metre. The brevity, the rapid transitions, particularly in the earlier parts, the sharp, quick, unannotated exchange of talk, the rhythmical and suggestive repetition of magical phrases, the allusions to the natural supernatural of the Middle Ages – all the freshness of the true ballad tone, which it is astounding to think that Coleridge was able to sense, through the artificialities of Bishop Percy's 'restored' and pruned *Reliques* – all this is gain: and offers a far finer vehicle for poetry than anything Coleridge had tried before. The Elizabethan influence, now more fundamental to his work, is found everywhere – in the topic itself, in the incidents, the albatross legend, the imagery (particularly that of the ice and the sea, which seem to reflect study of Donne's *Calm and Storm*): all indicates the extensive reading of the tales of the Voyagers which we know both Wordsworth and Coleridge pursued at this period, and whose intricate associates have been most interestingly unravelled in *The Road to Xanadu*. Wordsworth's influence on the style here shows itself for the first time (and it is rarely traceable later, apart from *The Three Graves*) in a certain bare simplicity of speech ('It is the moss that wholly hides The rotted old oak-stump') and in certain vivid images, for one of which ('the ribbed sea-sand') Coleridge

conscientiously gives Wordsworth definite credit.

Coleridge's own specific qualities here abound for the first time in triumphant profusion. His love of colour and colour-imagery gives us the bride 'red as a rose', the green ice, the white fog, the painted ship and the painted ocean and all the splendours of the calm, the contrasted white and gold of the spectres and the green, oily snakes. His love of beautiful, gentle scenery, noted before, leads him to linger exquisitely, where he need not, over the harbour, the sounds of the birds singing in June, the moonlit hilltop of his return and the meadow gale of Spring. And his magical power is seen to perfection in the presentation of the ghost ship, the moonlight effect recurring at the curse and also (symbolically) at the blessing: and in the passionate strength of the incident of the spirits' dragging the boat along with them.

The success of the magic in *The Ancient Mariner* originates in that 'willing suspension of disbelief' which the poet induces in the reader: and this, in its turn, arises from the psychological (or philosophical) basis of the poem. Coleridge believed that any world which the imagination can construct within itself is, if consistent, as valid and as real as the world outside the self; which, after all, to us only owes its apparent reality and validity to the fact that it is comprehended within our mind as possessing those attributes. The poem, then, from the writer's point of view, can be regarded as a proof of

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his general philosophical thesis: and the grounding of this thesis in the mind is very important for Coleridge's poetical development. For it is, from now onwards, to the mind, first and foremost, that Coleridge will look for inspiration: and mental processes and states will give the key to much of his work.

A remarkably personal emotional spirit finds full expression in this poem. There is a certain almost feminine abandonment to feeling, which is new in English Literature and which comes again in Shelley's songs and in Walt Whitman, and which is almost oriental in its lack of restraint. It comes effectively in the lines on his return (ll.461-71), in his blessing of the creatures and his invocations of sleep, in his description of the seraph band and, perhaps less effectively, in the emotionalized tones of the religious and moralizing sections, rather (from some points of view) reminiscent of the eighteenth-century Nonconformist preacher which Coleridge was and continued to be.

To sum up, the poem, upon examination, is seen to be not as mature as it is usually held to be. In itself, however, it is complete and astounding – it is really the first product of his pen in which all the influences of Coleridge's life and art meet. They are fused, but not sufficiently so. The effect is that of a wireless set where you can obtain 'all stations' but where the reception is not yet sufficiently clear. In style, perfection and homogeneity (or unity of

impression – the 'simplicity' of Milton) it is excelled by *Christabel*, *Love, Kubla Khan*, *The Garden of Boccaccio* and *Youth and Age*, where the fusion is complete. *The Ancient Mariner* holds something of the position in the works of Coleridge that *The Waste Land* occupies in the development of Mr. T. S. Eliot; it is a sort of second starting-point, rather than a final achievement.

VI

Before entering upon the final phase, we are confronted with a very elaborate and very important fragment, *The Three Graves*, which shows his mind experimenting tentatively with literary form as, at the same period, his note-books show him experimenting with metre. *The Three Graves* was composed and rehandled over a period of several years (1797-1809) and in it we see Coleridge endeavouring to tackle the Wordsworthian theories in the light of his own peculiar poetical equipment. The earlier parts were not published within his lifetime and the date of printing of Parts 3 and 4 – 1809 (and, later, with a prefatory apology in *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817, etc.) – was such that all due influence on the historic Romantic Movement was lost. One must never forget that the casualness with which Coleridge issued his work meant that his real value and importance, except through the generosity of such exceptional men as Sir Walter Scott, could never be publicly

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recognized at its moment of greatest power.

The influence of Wordsworth is alluded to in the preface. The interesting points to notice are these: The diction is not defended, as such, in any absolute sense, but as being 'dramatic' (as Wordsworth understood the word), that is, suitable to the person narrating who is here definitely specified as an 'old sexton', much as the narrator of *The Thorn* is specified as a retired sea-captain. Further, Coleridge is filled with a doubt – a survival of the eighteenth-century view of diction – as to whether this style is really suitable for anything but 'expressly ludicrous' work. This is perhaps an indication of something like the argument, which the French Romantic School had to maintain, to justify their use of the '*style bas*' for all subjects, and one should remember that this question was not finally resolved until Browning (in this sense the Victor Hugo of the century) released all words from their bondage – and used phrases, expressions and metres, which had been regarded as the absolute preserve of the satirist and lampooner, for the expression of the noblest emotions and deepest philosophical ideas of which he was capable. The third point is his queer assertion that 'its (the poem's) merits, if any, are purely psychological'. This is indeed the case with all of Coleridge's late poetry, so that in this respect *The Three Graves* falls in with what one might expect at this period.

The theme is practically that of *Harry Gill and Goody Blake*, but treated

with more power and handled much more convincingly, due perhaps to a wiser selection of metre. It is more than probable, however, that Coleridge's interest in the 'horrible effect on the imagination of an idea violently and suddenly impressed upon it' was, as his allusion to Indian and African customs suggests, the more profound and fundamental of the two. The opening parts, which remained in manuscript in Coleridge's lifetime, are quite vigorously written, though marred by a more than Wordsworthian bareness of style in places. There are, towards the end of the poem, some pretty vignettes of country scenes (the marriage of Edward and Mary and the scene where they are sitting in the dell) showing wonderfully Coleridge's almost Chaucerian pleasure in the little characteristic details of the picture of life.

Christabel, whose composition ranges from 1797 to 1801, presents us with a compendium of Coleridge's original, personal qualities, independent of all extraneous matter, and, in spite of a literal incompleteness, offers a perfection in its consistent presentation of mood, and in its absolute sureness of touch in both style and metre, that is unsurpassed in English Literature. It is necessary to insist that the fact of a poem's being a 'fragment' – in the sense that the story is not rounded off and brought to a conventional end – has no relation whatever to its unity as a poem. It is the unity of mood that counts: and in this sense *The Ancient Mariner*, though it is a tale told out to the end, is less complete, in the

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true sense, than either *Christabel* or *Kubla Khan*. With them, the spell-like writing, the hints of magic, the potent but dim suggestions of mystery – these are sufficient: they are indeed all the poem. Even the comparative ‘realism’ of Part 2 cannot counterpoise this. The apologetic tone Coleridge felt called upon to adopt in both cases was merely a concession to the ‘taste’ of the day. He alludes pathetically to his indolence and to the ‘person from Porlock’. Leading poets of our own day (like Ezra Pound in his *Cantos*) who accept that psychological basis of the poem (the unity of mood) which Coleridge was only distantly stumbling after, and whose validity he was afraid to recognize when he had achieved it, have written poems in which the whole point is that one’s own petty vices (to say nothing of innumerable ‘persons from Porlock’) do constantly interrupt one’s poetic reverie.

All the artificiality that disfigured the *Ancient Mariner* has gone: there is an almost incandescent purity of diction. The simplicity of the phrasing, the reliance on very little other than monosyllabic Saxon words – incredible for the period, and especially for a man of Coleridge’s learned cast – does not (so great is the power of genius informing them) detract from the original and entrancing interest of every fresh line. And in spite of the simplicity of diction there is a terrific concentration of expression everywhere. We have had this before in description: but little to beat the ‘one last leaf’, *Christabel*’s room with its delicacy of selection, and

the echoing and tumultuous vowel-music of the passage about the bells among the Cumberland hills. In narrative, it has come in the *Ancient Mariner*, though there it is closer to the model of the folk ballad: here, there is the unsurpassed rapidity of the lady’s capture and flight, reaching its climax perhaps in the line (wonderfully effective in its place) – ‘and once they crossed the shade of night’ – where Coleridge anticipates that exactness of scientific definition under an appearance of poetic wildness which was to be a too seldom observed characteristic of Shelley. The most powerful sections of the poem are those in which this concentration of expression is devoted to brief but very profound psychological analysis – in the passage on broken friendship (Part 1, ll.408–426) and in that on the perversity of love (Part 2, ll.656–678), the latter providing another point of contact with the Decadent ‘nineties’, though possessing in itself more of the fundamental soundness of (say) Dante than the affected morbidity of that crapulous but fascinating period.

Two important poetical ‘studies’ conclude the ‘glories’ of this period. *Kubla Khan*, apart from its points of association with *Christabel* and its interesting psychological origin, shows great elaboration of diction – the application of the technical virtuosity in the handling of the sounds of words which Edith Sitwell has drawn of late out of its neglect and oblivion in her sympathetic study of Pope – a virtuosity which in a limited, but perhaps more

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popularly appealing degree Tennyson and Swinburne variously possessed, and to which Wordsworth and most of the other poets of the Romantic Period laid no claim. Here, all is suggestion and mood. 'The woman wailing for her demon lover,' as well as the 'Abyssinian Maid', though in themselves exquisite touches in this particular poem, seem to point the way (if this is not too ungrateful a remark in view of Byron's expressed enthusiasm for this poem) for much Neo-Romantic fustian.

Love is difficult to appraise. It has a certain limited rightness of its own – in some respects a non-Coleridgian rightness – even to the point of absorbing, without any harm to itself, a good deal of impure diction. Arthur Symonds seems nearest the mark, when he describes it as resembling in technique and sentiment Raphael's Madonnas, 'in its exquisite perfection of the commonplace, its *tour de force* of an almost flawless girlishness'. It is possible, indeed, to detect here an element which became a definite part of what we consider the typically Mid-Victorian mode: and when one thinks of the contrast between the moonlit magic which Keats and the sultry poems which Rossetti were to extract from the impressions of the Medieval World which Coleridge did so much to create, it is well to remember that the schoolgirl primness of some of Tennyson's medievalism finds its sanction, here, too.

VII

Coleridge had by now clarified the stream of his poetic genius, and revealed his two greatest qualities: namely, his control of pure and pregnant diction and his ability to express vividly and simply the most complex psychological states: and it is in poems where these two qualities are found that his most intense power still continues to be shown, right up to his latest years. Unfortunately the material suitable for such a kind of poetry, in a man's life, is very rare, with the result that the remainder of Coleridge's output is interspersed with much that is either purely metrical exercise (though this only serves to emphasize the laborious workmanship which lay behind his apparently simple perfections), or else 'occasional' poetry – almost '*vers de société*'. *The Happy Husband* (1802), with its neat analysis of emotional phases, *The Pains of Sleep* (1803) with its subtle delineation of a transitory mental state, *The Blossoming of the Solitary Date Tree* with its brief and telling summary of the essential Coleridge – 'Delight in little things, The buoyant child surviving in the man' – these all lead on to *Time Real and Imaginary* (1812). Here, though the poem is called 'an allegory', it is really an Imagist poem in the statuesque pose of its figures: and the problem presented by the image is psychological – the reality of Time, as felt by 'troubled mankind' to whom it is a thing moving in the past, and as seen in 'vigorously

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active youth', where it seems never to move at all, but to be always present. This is the complex that seeks artistic solution in these later poems.

They all date from the last ten years of his life. In some ways the greatest *Youth and Age* is extremely interesting in its earliest manuscript form – dated, very circumstantially, '10 Sept., 1823, Wednesday Morning, 10 o'clock'. This version begins with five lines of doggerel and then breaks out into a free prose extravaganza like nothing so much as a prose poem by Rimbaud. It seems almost as if Coleridge were leading on his poetic genius by indulging it in the sort of prefatory automatic writing beloved of the French Surrealists. 'An air that whizzed . . . (right across the diameter of my Brain) exactly like a Hummel Bee, *alias* Dumbledore, the gentleman with Rappee Spenser, with bands of Red and Orange Plush Breeches, close by my ear, at once sharp and burry, right over the summit of Quantock, etc.' – all this leading to *Aria Spontanea*, which contains much of the material of the middle part of the poem. A later version gives the poem in the present order, with various emendations and cancelled passages down to the beginning of the conclusion, which was first published in 1832, as *An Old Man's Sigh*. The poem in its complete form dates from 1834. It exhibits all the characteristics of the later work and, in the actual uncertainty which Coleridge seems to have felt as to what was to be the final expression of his mood, there is some resemblance to the

genesis of Mr. T. S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men*.

A very beautiful poem of 1828, and one that shows Coleridge's literary skill unimpaired and capable of spreading itself over a considerable area of subject matter is *The Garden of Boccaccio*. It is stiffened by a certain formality of phrase, as befits an experiment in the Heroic Couplet and at the same time reverts somewhat to the old blank verse mode, reflective rather than lyric. It contains wonderful pictures of the process of awakening that Mrs. Gillman's title picture sets up in the lethargic mind of the poet, and then comes the powerful mental 'fresco' of Renaissance ideas. All the disparate and alluring images that the word would suggest to the mind of the cultured Romantic of the period (Leigh Hunt counts for something in this) are embodied in a harmonious whole, with the drowsy, idealizing charm of Coleridge's more genteel mood. Is it fanciful to see in the 'sly satyr peeping through the leaves' an anticipation, even, of the sort of humorous self-mockery – the habit of ending on a lower, conversational tone – which Rupert Brooke perhaps caught rather from Heine.

There is, at this period, a general rebirth of his poetical activity and two at least of the directions in which it worked were pioneer, as regards the Victorian Age. *Sancti Dominici Pallium* is mostly in Heroic Couplet too, but a couplet more in line with eighteenth-century taste in its savage satirical onslaught, yet reaching forward to the

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Meredith of the later poems in the vivid conclusion, with its harshly picturesque image – an image picturesque rather in a prose way. The other, *Alice du Clos*, is a ballad in which Coleridge seems to be testing his narrative power, pure and simple: the sole interest is in the situation, with just a slight psychological kernel. The purity of style and simplicity of phrasing are unsurpassed and the poem has to be accepted for what it is: there is no need to lament Coleridge's failure (which may not mean his inability) to introduce those elements of 'magic' which his former ballads had contained. Each of his four ballads (as can be said equally of all his poems) was practically a study in some special style of writing and it is this very failure to reproduce copies of himself that constitutes Coleridge's real greatness.

Four poems remain which present us vivid poetical images of moments of psychological perception. One is the unnamed *Song*, dated perhaps 1825, which says the last concentrated word on the twofold power of love. The same qualities are found in the queerly named *Love, Hope and Patience in Education*: and that it is not exaggerating the importance of these apparent trifles is shown by Coleridge's own elaborate note on the omission of certain lines at the end. 'They diverted and retarded the stream of thought and injured the organic unity of the composition.' With the short dialogue, *Phantom or Fact* (1830) we have the old, sad, haunting puzzle of the identity of man at different stages of life – a pathetic

thought to Coleridge whose personality always seemed thwarted of what it ought to have been. In this poem he achieves a perfect epigrammatic conclusion to his argument (which had assumed so many other forms in his work), exhibiting a kind of lyrical wit in the antithetical proposition that this vision of himself was either 'a fragment from the life of dreams' or 'a record from the dream of life'. And finally comes *Love's Apparition and Evanishment*, described as an 'allegorical romance,' but, like the others, an image of a moment of psychological perception. It is again interesting to examine the simple form of this poem, when the 'Envoy' starts it and the tale is just told. The elaborateness of the image in its final form shows Coleridge's genius unclouded, right up to the end of his career, in its power of producing the concentrated perfection of poetry while yet never going beyond the very simplest language. Yet, through our failure to analyse the processes of his development, we are in danger of neglecting this power for the sake of overpraising certain of his writings where, as he says, it is 'indispensable that the *Piu* should not overlay the *Uno*, that the unity should be evident. But,' adds he (and this is the Odyssey of his poetical life), 'to sacrifice the *gratification*, the sting of *pleasure*, from a fine *passage* to the *satisfaction*, the sense of *complacency* arising from the contemplation of a symmetrical *Whole* is among the last conquests achieved by men of genial powers.'

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And so, with his lifelong ideal attained, Coleridge, like Wordsworth (though with more of Wordsworth's confidence, for his ideal took the form of a process, not a monument), survived, all uncomprehending, into an Age which was seeking other excellencies than those to which his whole mental fight had been devoted. These excellencies happened to be, intellectually, lower and less adventurous than those of the two great Romantics. Theirs had implied a vaster and more comprehensive synthesis of life than the Victorians were to prove capable of. But it is entertaining (is it not?) to think that the Victorians (whose literary judgments still remain for the most part ours) were in the happy position of being able to appreciate them for qualities on which they themselves set little value, and to give them, on the whole, quite a respectable place as precursors of their own magnificence.

The Loft God

by George Scott Moncrieff

JAMES returned to a land of stone houses: the soft stone of the Lothians, yellow and pink, sometimes red or grey. It was a difference not only to the sight but to the touch. Running his hands down the walls gave that exquisite agony to the finger-tips, the faint intimate cut of the hewn stone. Under the hands the red brick of Middlesex was shameful: it crumbled into grit; it never gave the passionate quivers down the arm to the breast, and to look at it was monotonous, dull and formal as a dining-room.

James played alone in the stableyard. Steps ran up from the flagged yard to the loft, twisted iron railings flanked one side of them, the stable stone the other. From the platform by the loft door could be seen the drying-green with its sentry posts suspending flapping ropes of drying clothes. Behind was a belt of fir and beech, then the road and the traffic sounds coming faintly to the watcher by the loft.

There was an empty stone dovecot standing alone on the edge of the green, as clean as a ruined cottage.

James was forbidden to leave the policies. There was a surfeit of space for him there, with many possibilities,

and he was content with the battered empty outhouses, the weedy walled garden, the unchecked shrubbery, and the straight trees of the wood with their boles deep in rubble, long plants and nettles. A burn ran in under the dyke, and quickly out again through the fields. A few small trout lingered under stones, with sudden sallies into mid-stream where they would pause, dark against the dun mud, darting back in alarm at the pale disc of James's face. There were nettle fights for him, armed with a switch: dropping nettle heads would sting his legs, or hands or face, until it was necessary to go to the dock bed and rub the wounds, and to sit there, convalescent. One part of the garden wall could be climbed, and the top was wide enough for walking round. A magazine of stone ammunition could be stored on the wall-top and used in attacks upon the garden's besiegers, the stable, the dovecot, and the rubbish trailing out from the trees. But some tiles being dislodged from the stable roof, the game was officially forbidden, therefore only to be played with caution. There was the mud of the burn to stir, and attempts to guddle the fish to be made. There was the inexhaustible search for strange things. In the

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garden it was snail shells, small like tragets or larger, multicoloured, dimming with their inner death. There were endless pieces of old clay pipe, dropped by generations of gardeners. In the potting-shed queer things had been dumped and left: an earthenware pig with grooves in its back for planting grass seed to look like bristles, a woman with a baby in her arms, of china, but it was a jug really

One day, however, James wished to go out of the grounds: no one was about, so he went through the gate and sauntered down the road. Arriving in the village he stood about, watching the carts and cars, the dirty-faced children running and shouting together, playing and shouting ceaselessly.

His mother found him by the horse-trough watching children splashing each other.

He was dragged off by the hand. He listened patiently to the rigmarole: it was dishonest, the rule was for his own sake, he might get run over, he had frightened her out of her life, he was very naughty. The separate words conveyed nothing, but his mother's hand clutching his own, and the tragic tone of her voice, combined to contrive deadening, unreasoning, blows, and a nauseating intimation of what was to follow: his father, and more talk followed by the eventual punishment and forgiveness. Nothing that he might say could mean anything to them. When his mother asked him why he had gone out, he could only answer that he had wanted to, calling forth

rebukes full of a conscious relentlessness, which must be maintained until the stage of forgiveness: it was dishonest, the rule was for his own sake, he might get run over, he had frightened his mother out of her life.

He was kept in the house till his father's return, when his mother's voice summoned him to the study.

He took his seat at the far end of the black oak table: his parents sat at the other end. The smell of polish became acrid with the impending storm.

'You did it when I was out,' his father's voice crashed through the silence, and your mother could not stop you. Have you anything to say for yourself?

James shut himself from thought. He watched a fly crawling along the table towards his parents and wondered why it did not fly if it wanted to get there.

His father looked at his mother for advice: her eye bade him continue.

'It is not because you went out of the garden that is so wicked, but because you went out when there was no one there to stop you. That was a lie, James.'

It struck James as silly: how could he have gone out if there had been anyone there to stop him? But he knew that argument would only lengthen the admonition, so he said nothing.

'And,' continued his father laboriously, 'You had no thought for your mother, who was terrified when she could not find you. Because, James, she loves you, you must think

George Scott Moncrieff

of her and not do what will hurt her. . . .'

James's mother shook her head modestly, and his father, accepting this as implying that he had said enough, concluded: 'I am afraid, James, there is only one thing to be done.'

James was put over his father's knee and beaten with a slipper. It hurt enough to make his eyes hot and wet. Then he was allowed to run out.

Walking slowly round the walled garden, he wondered. He was not bitter: it seemed simply that they were different, with likes and dislikes, rules and methods, incomprehensible to him, as his to them. Of course there was God, a confused God less akin to church and Bible-readings than to his own private thoughts and to other books. And God was always there he had been told, and knew everything. If He knew everything, He must understand.

His name was called. For awhile he defiantly paid no attention: then he ran in, was forgiven and sent to bed.

The loft was the most suitable place, no one else ever went there, it was almost empty, it was secret, with intoxicating smell, with a forbidden atmosphere. He pushed a packing-case against the far wall, tearing his skin on a nail. His hand bled interestingly and he smeared the blood in patterns on the rough wood. It was exquisite; he sang while he did it.

He called God 'Ben', because God sounded wrong, belonging elsewhere, and sang Ben a long chant of blood and understanding.

There was a carved stone, a fragment of a coat-of-arms once set in the wall of an earlier building; it had a bird on it. He struggled with it up to the loft and set it on the altar. He brought up the earthenware pig, also, and the lady who was a jug. She became something of a goddess and the jug was part of her godhead: she was not like ordinary people.

Now down the path there was the magnificence of a pilgrimage: gossamer-twisted weeds, bending poppies, fanged nettles, and intruding bushes flanked a noble way towards the stableyard. Under the dark trees sometimes Ben must pass. James made every effort to stay out late in hope of the Presence. The burn was a baptismal spring: the walled garden held monastic privacy. The drying-green was a loitering place for a priest. Only the house lacked sanctity: it belonged to his parents, and James could not remain in it longer than was needful for sleep and meals.

He added to the collection on the altar, stones good to the hands, a wooden wolf, a large jar of purled glass. Each day its appearance was changed by flowers laid on the altar, thrown away next morning and others of different colour laid in their place.

He sang to Ben, he danced before His altar, he prayed aloud. All that appealed to him seemed part with Ben, all that was of his parents a kind of potent evil.

He found one of his father's razor-blades. In the loft he incised his hand; the dark blood gushed willingly, and dipping his finger in it he wrote in bold

The Loft God

letters BEN, and below, since the blood still flowed, *God* in smaller letters. Then he returned to the house white in the face. He lied and said he had cut himself on a broken bottle in the wood. It was a fine virtue to lie for Ben. His mother washed and bound his hand and made him rest in an arm-chair.

'Poor child,' she told his father, 'He's quite weak from loss of blood.'

But James knew it was not loss of blood but the glory of Ben.

Sometimes on the altar he despoiled bees, flies, wasps or beetles, pulling them apart with the ecstatic sadism of the child who is continually refreshed by the blundering brutality of his surroundings. They were sacrifice. Frogs and toads were friends; he sometimes brought them to the loft for worship.

All his thinking was filled with the worship of Ben. It was in Ben's honour that he walked the length of the dyke: a feat he could only perform with the aid of continual invocation, for the dyke was dry-stone and unsteady. He saw *Ben* in letters of fire across the sunset. *Ben* he wrote on scraps of paper, and tore them up with a rich secrecy.

One day he found a shilling on the mantelpiece in the study. He fingered it for a long while: he knew it was valuable, Ben might like it. It was time he brought something new to the loft. So he took it, and laid it upon Ben's altar.

He was asked where the shilling was. It was hard to lie, and he was

obviously doubted, but he brazened it out, then ran with his tears to Ben's altar.

Three mornings later he had picked a bunch of gilly-flowers for the altar. He climbed the steps, to stop in horror at the top: the door of the loft was open and from within came his mother's voice.

'What shall we do about it? It's terrible.'

His father replied, 'Here's the shilling, and a razor-blade of mine, bloodstained -- do you remember the time he cut himself and said he had done it on a bit of glass in the wood? He never used to be untruthful. . . .'

'Charles, it's terrible. We must be gentle with him. We must talk to him, not punish him too much.'

'Yes, you're right. But he must be stopped telling lies.'

'Darling -- you don't think there is anything wrong with him--mentally, I mean?'

There was a pause.

'No,' said his father, 'I don't think so, my dear.'

'I've never been hard on him,' said his mother.

'Of course not, no child could have a sweeter mother. Look here, you go and find him and take him to the study. I'll follow: I'll just clear this away. . . .'

James slipped down the steps and hid in the farthest dark of the stable. He heard his mother call his name, he pressed himself closer to the wall and prayed to Ben to take His vengeance.

Cross-Section

LETTERS TO NIGERIA—II

PALL MALL

July 12th, 1934.

MY DEAR N.

The heat makes it very difficult to sit down and write. I find that in such weather I eat well and sleep well, but a book is apt to fall off one's knees or even a pen from one's fingers. If one weren't obliged either to read or to write, everything would be perfect. We have had a wave of heat for a fortnight now. But it is unlike our usual heatwaves. It reminds me of Athens in the summer. There has been an east wind the whole time and a pleasant dry feeling in the air. But the sun itself has been terrific, striking one almost like a blow in the face when one crosses the street out of the shade of the houses.

There has been a strange disease about. It is called 'Wimbledon throat' because so many players in the Wimbledon tournament went down with it. But it hit the Australian cricket team pretty hard, and so might just as well be called 'Australian throat'. One London doctor has been foolish enough to give it a name which sounds scientific, but of course he knows no more about it than anyone else. It is quite likely that you would know more about it than people here. It consists substantially of painful tonsils, headaches and a temperature of a degree or so over

100°. It seems to be cured by the simple process of staying in bed for 2 or 3 days. You then get up and win a semi-final or make a century. The really odd thing about it is that its ravages appear to be confined almost, though not quite, to athletes in the pink of condition who take violent exercise in the sun. I wonder whether with your long experience of the tropics you have any ideas on the subject. It is quite a trifling thing anyhow, only prominent because of the temporary prominence of the people affected by it.

Incomparably the most important thing – apart of course from sport! – that has happened since I last wrote to you is the new Hitler *coup* in Germany. Yet I don't know quite what to say about it.

For the first time, as far as I can remember, in all the twenty years or so that I have spent watching and studying European politics on and off the spot I have a sense of bafflement. I have no feeling of certainty about what exactly it was that happened in Berlin and Munich twelve days ago. I have my opinions of course, but before expressing them with full confidence I should like to have a couple of days walking about and sniffing as it were, and buying odds and ends in the Unter den Linden and the Wilhelmstrasse. Since I was there just over a year ago so much has happened. Half

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an hour in the 'Adlon' bar or a meal in the 'Continental' would probably give me all I want.

It's an odd thing, that, you know – though every foreign correspondent, who is worth his salt, is consciously or unconsciously familiar enough with it, you must 'smell' a place if you want to know what is really happening.

As I read over what I have written here it seems almost that I have been writing about some sort of mysticism, and so perhaps in a sense it is. Yet it is extremely practical. There are things you can tell by physical sight and touch that you can tell by nothing else at all. There is only one man I have ever met whom I would completely trust to give me the 'low-down' about a political situation anywhere in Europe. He used to write me long letters, and I used sometimes to send them on to the F.O. because no one in Europe knew quite as much as he did. He was an American-born German, and Hearst paid him the highest salary that, I think, has ever been paid to a journalist, and he earned – if Hearst wanted the truth – every penny of it. He could smell and talk and write.

This seems rather a round-about way of saying that I am not sure what is happening in Germany at this moment. We haven't any really first-rate newspaper men there. *The Times* man is enormously better than he was twelve months ago, when he refused to see any good in Hitler at all and wrote of him as if he were only some sort of ugly fungus. He now writes sense, the best and most informative sense, I

think, that is being printed anywhere in Europe. Which is exactly as it should be. After all, if one can't trust *The Times* what can one trust?

Lloyd George's *Memoirs* are still appearing serially, day by day, in the *Telegraph*, and I am increasingly impressed with their importance as a historical document.

The book as a whole will constitute a devastating exposure of the 'innards' of government such as has never before been written I think in any age or in any language. It is safe to say that it will be read 500 years hence – unless perchance literate humanity should by that time have ceased to exist.

That may seem at first blush a most extravagant statement. It also seemed so to me indeed as I wrote it. Yet I think you will agree, if you think of it, that it is not really extravagant at all. L.L.G. is writing of the critical years, 1917 and 1918, of the greatest war in the history of the world. During those years, moreover, he was unquestionably the most powerful man in the world – for Wilson's temporary and essentially adventitious *éclat* was only a big bright bubble at best. No one else on either side, soldier, sailor, or civilian, possessed either half his actual power or half his knowledge; and here we have that knowledge set down in black and white with all the objective frankness and a large measure of the skill of a really first class journalist.

He gives one the sense – and, personally, I am sure that this is no illusion – on the one hand, of having

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kept nothing at all back, and on the other of having written with the most meticulous regard for absolute fairness and accuracy. His book will no doubt arouse a storm of criticism, especially when it is published in France, but I shall be greatly surprised if anyone can successfully challenge a single one of his statements of fact.

Some parts of the record are horrible in the proper and utmost sense of that word. I am thinking in particular of the story of the origin and progress of the Passchendaele offensive of the autumn of 1917. There is scarcely anything in L.L.G.'s account that is actually new, but he provides complete and final confirmation for every point of the very severest criticism that has ever been written of that most awful and bloodiest of all Haig's blunders – in which the British Army suffered over 400,000 casualties in gaining a strip of mud which the Germans re-took in a few hours four or five months later.

The full story is hardly credible. The whole project was Haig's from beginning to end and Haig's alone. The War Cabinet was against it but Haig gave them to understand that Pétain and Foch were 'in agreement' with his plans, and expressed himself a confidence amounting almost to certainty that he would succeed. It subsequently turned out that Pétain and Foch *had* in fact 'agreed', but only in the sense of having given a most reluctant consent to an operation which, as we know from Sir Henry Wilson's diary, Foch in fact regarded as 'futile, fantastic, and dangerous'. Foch

asked Wilson 'who it was who wanted Haig to go on a duck's march through the inundations to Ostend and Zeebrugge'. The actual truth was that no one wanted him to, neither the French nor the General Staff in London nor even his own subordinate commanders.

Lloyd George does not quote Wilson's diary. He merely records how the War Cabinet was misled and why they felt it impossible to veto a plan which Haig induced them to believe, was accepted by all 'the soldiers'. They gave their consent subject to a promise by Haig that the operation should be broken off if complete success became unproportionate to cost.

There followed four months of sheer deceit. Successes were magnified, losses minimized, official reports from G.H.Q. were 'concocted'. When Lloyd George went over to visit the front the 'cages' of German prisoners were specially 'packed' in order to deceive him. Haig himself never once visited the battlefield. When General Gough, who was in actual command in the long battle, reported strongly at an early stage in favour of the abandonment of a costly attack which in his opinion could not succeed Haig suppressed the report . . . and so on. The story is really almost too awful for repetition. What it seems to come to in plain words is this; that Haig, against the views alike of his subordinates, of his superiors, and of his French colleagues sacrificed 400,000 British soldiers in a stupid and vain attempt to score a great personal success.

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The War Cabinet, L.I.G. writes, 'had to judge on a basis of essential facts suppressed, distorted, and misrepresented . . . The soldiers had their way . . . It is one of the bitter ironies of the War that I, who have been ruthlessly assailed in books, in the press, and in speeches, for "interfering with the soldiers" should carry with me as my most painful regret the memory that on this issue I did not justify that charge'.

I think however that L.I.G. has made some amends for that moral failure by writing this book. For he has certainly destroyed for all time the speciously attractive cry of 'Leave the soldiers alone to do the job'. He has demonstrated beyond all reasonable possibility of dispute that it would have been a lucky thing for England if Earls Jellicoe and Haig had succumbed in infancy to some childish ailment.

L.I.G. does not specially condemn Haig. He thought that almost all the Allied Generals were pretty stupid. He writes a comprehensive description of the Higher Command, as he knew it, English, French and Italian alike: 'Highly trained, conscientious, courageous soldiers of average intelligence, but devoid of all the attributes of genius, imagination, originality of conception or fertility of resource, and quite unequal to the calls of any great emergency'.

L.I.G.'s reference to 'concocted' reports from G.H.Q. reminds me of a fact which I have never wished to remember. During the last year of the war I was, as you know, in Sweden.

There, of course, the British and German military communiqués were printed side by side in the newspapers day by day. I had a large map of France pinned on my wall upon which I marked in pencils of various colours every movement of the line. As this map was for my own information, as it were, and I wished it to be accurate, I fell almost unconsciously into the habit of marking in accordance with the reports of German not British Headquarters. I think that is the only connection in which I have ever, when abroad, felt even slightly ashamed of my own countrymen, and I can never in my heart quite forgive Haig for that.

But poor Gough! How extraordinary his fate has been! On three occasions within five years he was the subject of extremely wide and unfavourable public comment, and on each of them history cannot fail to justify every single action he took. He was damned first for his apparent leadership in April, 1914, of the so-called 'mutiny' of the Army in Ireland. The facts, now well enough known, show that he was placed by blundering superiors in an impossible situation in which he adopted the only course that was open to a decent and honourable soldier. Next, in 1917, he was placed in command of an absurd military operation of which he expressed in writing his strong disapproval, and of which, by the way, Haig (in view no doubt of the suppressed report) refused to allow him to be made the official scapegoat, but could not save him from the discredit

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in the eyes either of the army or of the public. And then in the following year his worn out 'Fifth Army' was asked to face, without adequate forces or reserves, the brunt of the great German spring offensive. In this case Haig was obliged to make a sacrifice of him; yet the whole story as we now know it leaves not the smallest blemish upon his reputation either for gallantry, which goes, of course, without saying, or for efficiency, which in the British Army by no means goes without saying.

Such has been Gough's recurrent fate. Yet a more cheerful soul I have never known. Circumstances have not soured him in the slightest degree. I had not seen him for two or three years until I met him again only a few weeks ago at dinner. His high spirits are still as high as ever and any stranger would certainly take him for at least 10 years younger than he actually is. He is fourteen years older than you are but you might easily be taken for school-fellows, with you as the graver of the two. He happens, by the way, though I don't think you have met him, to be a great pal of a great pal of yours – H. L.

So much for the present.

Yours as ever,

C. S.

CRIME, COURTESY, ET CÆTERA

It is dangerous to have good manners – especially if you are a motorist. If you offer a lift to a lonely walker, he may rob you. If you stop to assist a car broken down on the road, vile creatures may jump on your running board and remove your pocket book.

Therefore, on such occasions, you drive past on the other side as rapidly as possible. We must cultivate rudeness from self-defence, inconsiderateness from caution.

In cities bag-snatchers get their victims to stop by asking the way to some street; and confidence tricksters know how to use to fullest advantage those courtesies of casual questioning which few have the disposition to refuse. A person of innate boorishness, then, is less likely to run certain dangers than does a polite and helpful person. Thus crime, apart from other serious aspects, well known to sociologists, is damaging courtesy.

The polite man who, knowing the perils, continues his pleasant behaviour in public, is then, no weakling. He also needs iron nerves to withstand the constant contrary tendencies – the harshness of the rushed business man, the 'out-of-my-way' expression of the nervous motorist, and he still smiles when, allowing the clamouring rush to precede him, he is the last to get on to the omnibus.

Just think what a beautiful thing a travel office can be! It enables the stout rich man – you know the sort – to say casually to the clerk:

'I should like to go on a voyage round the world.'

And the clerk replies: 'We'll arrange all the details, sir. You need have no further worry'.

'I want to see China and the South Sea Islands.'

'Yes, that will be all right, sir.'

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'And Japan.'

'Japan too.'

The stout rich man can walk back to his room at the Ritz happily, knowing that all will be admirably arranged. He will see China, Japan, and the South Sea Islands without further worry

The hall porter watches everyone enter the building. He conveys messages. He shepherds visitors. He scrutinizes everyone.

For this reason he regards himself as important and puffs out his chest.

But the manager of the building, in his high remote office, thinks of him only as a sentry, who is necessary perhaps but easily replaced.

WAR AND PEACE

Arma verumque cano – so Virgil once began. We do not sing of that. We, under the shadow of an inadequate statesmanship, are filled with misgiving. There are references to war in the conversation of our friends. One says: 'What will you do?' Another: 'It's too terrible to think of.' Another, laughing, says: 'I'll go to the front line. That will be the safest place'. Then there is silence for a moment. The subject is changed.

War. War. Always this preparation for a war which nobody wants. No one is nominally responsible. Everyone passes the responsibility to someone else, usually in some other country. God, in Cranmer's prayer, is described

as 'the author of peace' (he is not a best-seller.) But who is the 'author of war'?

Mr. Huxley regards a mode of thought as an origin of war, and speculates on how that might be conditioned away. M. Julien Benda, on somewhat similar lines, says: 'Peace will be brought about, not by the fear of war, but by the love of peace'. Let us gaze wistfully at a prospect of continuous peace – seeing that we may be looking upon it for the last time. What is this peace, that we are supposed to love, this thing which is often thrown away carelessly? It is not just a state of non-war.

How ignorant we are of peace! How smart and clever we are on the subject of war! We have many maxims telling us what a true British gentleman does when the bugles blow. But how he should behave when there is no fighting to be done, is not such common knowledge.

Perhaps that is why so many of our finer types make up curious expeditions and go walking for months over arctic snow; or climb mountains (superfluous procedure); or merely wander abroad and idle in foreign resorts. They do not understand the tasks of peace, have no vocation for peace; and so try to fill the time with some of the hazards and pointless pleasure of war.

Yet these are the very people – leisured and intelligent, who, above all others, might be serving the real cause of civilization.

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But, again, what is peace? Supposing we open our history books, we read accounts of a series of wars as far back as the memory of man. Periods of peace are quickly passed over as without much interest: the historian occupies himself with discussing the cause, duration and after-effects of wars. One day a historian will chronicle the past with an emphasis on the periods of peace. He will discuss what fructified in them and why they failed to remain stable. This will be useful work.

Probably he will discover that peace is a time when, among other things, the arts flourish, the mind expands, when courtesy is encouraged. Long ago in China, I believe, good examples might be noted. On the

whole it would seem, then, that peace is aristocratic and 'high-brow'. And for that reason, I sometimes wonder – do we *really* want peace?

The two figures who symbolize the two kinds of activity, war and peace, are the soldier and the artist. Will we ever choose the artist as our favoured one?

The importance of wise leisure here crops up. The mind for peace is made during the hours of leisure of ordinary men and women. It is those who do not know how to amuse themselves that join private armies and form the hysterical element in political situations. But people who have wise and enjoyable leisure are not dangerous animals.

G. B.



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Reviews

A COMPANION TO SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

A COMPANION TO SHAKESPEARE STUDIES.

Edited by HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER and G. B. HARRISON. Cambridge University Press, 12s. 6d. net

THE object of the editors has been to provide the student – as far as possible – with a contemporary approach to Shakespeare, the poet-dramatist. The result is a book which must be read from cover to cover, not used merely for reference, to make its effect. But it has the inevitable drawback to its form in spite of the title it is not companionable: if one has grown friendly with an essayist his voice suddenly ceases, and one is left sighing ‘I should like this in a moog’. Happily in the case of Mr. Granville-Barker, whose single essay fulfils the purpose of the book more completely than any other, the moog, though not yet filled to the brim, is available in his *Prefaces to Shakespeare*. How illuminating is his discussion of ‘The Boy as Woman’, shewing how Shakespeare turned his very limitations into strength in the presentation, not the conception, of character. The boy is never set to do “anything ridiculous or embarrassing. For all the theme’s passion, there is next to no physical love-making in

Romeo and Juliet. The two are left alone together only for the less than forty lines of their tragic parting, for her yet more tragic waking to find him dead, and for the balcony scene. This is the play’s pre-eminent love scene (it is, I suppose, the first passionate love scene in Elizabethan drama and may well have been the making of the play’s success), and in it the lovers are carefully kept out of physical touch. Even when he comes to treat *Antony and Cleopatra* – of all subjects in the world! – Shakespeare can escape the obvious dangers; can miss what would seem to the dramatist of to-day his likeliest opportunities. The story begins with their parting; when they meet again catastrophe is imminent, and what is sensual in their passion is sublimated by its tragedy. Shakespeare, in fine, asks nothing of his Cleopatra that a boy cannot accomplish. Positively, by painting her in this medium of delicate dialectic, of swift speech, and of the music and colour of words, he puts the skill of the boy actor at a premium. And, in consequence, the charms of the actress of to-day are superfluous, nor has room been left for their exercise. The ‘serpent of old Nile’, realistic in the flesh, will but obscure Shakespeare’s Cleopatra. To tell a woman to begin her study of how to play a woman’s

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part by imagining herself a boy may seem absurd; but this is the right approach nevertheless."

The other editor, Mr. G. B. Harrison, can also supply us with a most satisfying moog, his series of *Elizabethan Journals*, to supplement 'The National Background.' A third essay which awakens my peculiar thirst 'The Social Background' with an entertaining discussion of the status of Shakespeare's characters – Maria, by the way, I know well and she is certainly a lady, but I don't yet feel sure of Emilia – and the warning that 'Shakespeare is not a document: he is a dramatist'. John Shakespeare might have passed his servants over their preparations for a wedding, but the Elizabethan nobleman, old Capulet's peer, would never have been seen in the kitchen, and it would have been utterly impossible for Macbeth to obey his lady and find his own night-gown.

The essays in Shakespearean criticism (though this applies less to Mr. Eliot than to the others) necessarily tend through limitation of space to become in parts little more than catalogues, and sometimes inadequate catalogues at that. Mr. Child, for instance, quotes Hazlitt's and Lewes' strictures on Kean's acting and ignores the praise which his ghost must wear forever as an order – 'The sensual life of verse springs warm from the lips of Kean, and to one learned in Shakespearian hieroglyphics – learned in the spiritual portion of those lines to which Kean adds a sensual grandeur

– his tongue must seem to have robbed the Hybla bees and left them honeyless! There is an indescribable *gusto* in his voice, by which we feel that the utterer is thinking of the past and future while speaking of the instant. When he says in Othello 'Put up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them,' we feel that his throat had commanded where swords were as thick as reeds. From eternal risk, he speaks as though his body were unassailable. In Richard, 'Be stirring with the lark to-morrow, gentle Norfolk!' comes from him, as through the morning atmosphere, towards which he yearns. Other actors are continually thinking of their sum-total effect throughout a play. Kean delivers himself up to the instant feeling, without a shadow of a thought about anything else.'

The hope of the editors 'that the book may make a wider appeal than to the specialist student' deserves to be realized. But I must confess that Mr. Isaacs' suggestion that England, America and Germany should allocate and apportion their tasks, that the universities should weigh in with organized seminars, that someone should give us a volume of translations from the Latin drama, and that somebody else should throw off a full study of Shakespeare's 'powers and paths of creation' leaves me gasping, or do I mean gaping? After all the best way to keep Shakespeare with us is to know his works, not to bury him alive in a voluminous shroud of revaluations.

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If Shakespeare is to go on living in the world of to-day children must act him and read him aloud almost from the cradle.

'Thy mistress, Pisanio, hath played the strumpet in my bed; the testimonies whereof lie bleeding in me.' – Do not boggle over such innocent emendations: no other intimacy can take the place of this. Then, later, should come Mr. Granville-Barker with his *Prefaces*, and lastly, when they have realized fully that Shakespeare 'not only wrote but thought and felt dramatically' they may sit down to a solitary fireside Shakespeare with Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith as the friend of Shakespearean maturity.

JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE NIGHT

JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE NIGHT By
LOUIS-FERDINAND CÉLINE. Trans-
lated by JOHN MARKS. CHATTO &
WINDUS. 8s. 6d.

WHAT a marvellous work is man, and so forth! Well, it seems that poor Shakespeare was wrong, and that all the tragedians from Aeschylus onwards were wrong. Ferdinand Bardamu, the hero of Céline's *Voyage au bout de la Nuit*, says so at considerable length in the vigorously coarse language of the Paris streets. As he remarks at intervals in recounting his life as a soldier in the war, as an emigrant to Africa and as a doctor in a tenement quarter of

Paris, life is a dunghill, in which human beings crawl about, abysmally bored, seeking nothing but how to kill one another piecemeal. One could make a pretty anthology of his variations on this theme, but the following are fair samples:

Living, just by itself – what a dirge that is! Life is a class-room and Boredom's the beak, there all the time to spy on you; whatever happens you've got to look as if you were awfully busy all the time doing something that's terribly exciting – or he'll come along and nibble your brain. A day that is nothing but a mere round of twenty-four hours isn't to be borne. It has to be one long almost unbearable thrill, a twenty-four-hour copulation, willy-nilly.

On n'explique rien. Le monde ne sait que vous tuer comme un dormeur quand il se retourne le monde, sur vous, comme un dormeur tue ses puces.

In the cold of Europe, under prudish Northern fogs, except when slaughter is afoot you only glimpse the crawling cruelty of your fellow men. But their rottenness rises to the surface as soon as they are tickled by the hideous fevers of the tropics. It's then that the wild unbuttoning process begins, and degradation triumphs, taking hold of us entirely. A biological confession of weakness. As soon as work and the cold restrain us no longer, as soon as their stranglehold is loosened, you catch sight in

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the white race of what you see on a pretty beach when the tide goes out: reality, heavy-smelling pools of slime, the crabs, the carcasses, and scum.

'*Mares lourdement puantes, les crabes, la charogne et l'étron*': One might liken the whole book to the ballad of an Ancient Scavenger who stoppeth one of three to tell his tale of squalor, horror and degradation without relief and without an end. It is a nightmare, brilliantly told; but the conviction that it is a nightmare comes from the reader. The author makes no suggestion of fantasy. He presents it without comment as the reflection of life in the mind of an intelligent but abulic Frenchman, lecherous, cynical, without energy or purpose and without either the means or power to gratify his sensual desires. It is pessimism unrelieved. The book does not suggest that there are shadows, but that there is no light; not that the soul of man has infinite potentialities of evil, as well as of good, but that there is no soul; not that the instincts overcome the reason, but that there is no reason. '*Wahn, Wahn, uberall Wahn!*' sings Hans Sachs. 'Muck, muck, everywhere muck,' says Bardamu. There is no redemption, no Prometheus to be unbound, no tragedy; but only perpetual damnation for humanity, more wretched even than the vermin because tortured with unappeasable desires. It is, then, obvious, that on any positive view of morality transcendent, immanent, commonsense, utilitarian or aesthetic,

the view of humanity expressed in this book is immoral. It is a sinister work, because it is brilliantly narrated. Mephistopheles could do no better.

This having been said, one can discuss it in a clear light. It is better to read the book in French, for although Mr. Marks has set about an immensely difficult job with great spirit and no little care, he has not the copious and picturesque vocabulary that would have been necessary to give an adequate idea of M. Céline's *langue verte*, with its syntactical inversions and its richness of invention. Mr. Marks' phraseology is not a language of the people but the semi-Americanized jargon of the bar and the night-club, with no caricaturing power and wilting before the extreme words which, no doubt perforce, are all glossed over. An Urquhart or Motteux of to-day alone could translate this book well; and even then, so enfeebled has our urban *langue verte* become, nobody would understand it. However, it was a clever device of M. Céline to choose this loose, rapid jargon, in which dullness and pompous abstraction would be impossible. Yet the captivating vivacity of the language is only a part of the supreme merit of the book, which the Italians would call *efficacia*, an enormous effectiveness. Every scene conveys the exact impression of ironic disgust that was intended, whether it be a sceptical, frightened orderly watching his fire-eating colonel blown up by a shell, a Zeppelin alarm in Paris, a colonial port in sweltering Africa, a street lavatory in New York, a death from haemorrhage

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in a Paris tenement, or a troupe of English girls waggling their haunches '*avec cette énergie de race un peu ennuyeuse, cette continuité intransigeante qu'ont les bateaux en route, les étraves, dans leur labeur infini au long des Océans*'. Moreover, there are passages, punctuating these scenes from low life, where the author's emotions swell up into a macabre lyricism of extraordinary sweep and power. The most remarkable of these, perhaps, is the magnificent passage beginning (p. 383 of the English and p. 446 of the French editions) with the misery expressed by the English dancers in their 'blues' and culminating in Bardamu's vision of the dead rising among the clouds of night above the Galeries Dufayel and fading away at dawn towards the fogs of England and Britannia vainly trying to boil a kettle for tea. It would be interesting to contrast this book with M. Romain's still more voluminous *Hommes de Bonne Volonté*, especially as regards the light they throw upon the French view of life to-day. It would also be interesting to analyse the difference between the ineffective Pardamu and Robinson, the more determined criminal who crosses his path at intervals. Robinson, in the dramatic final scene, is shot by his sweetheart because, like Alberich, he curses love: and Bardamu measures his own failure by reflecting that he himself has never had a single idea stronger than death. The unspeakable Robinson dying like a hero for truth, or rather for an absolute negation — that is the climax and the clue to whole purpose of this novel.

GETTING TOGETHER

MANIFESTO: Being the Book of the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals. Edited by C. E. M. JOAD, with an Introduction by H. G. WELLS. Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d.

DETERMINATIONS. Edited, with an Introduction, by F. R. LEAVIS. Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.

MR. WELLS feels: 'There is a great and growing stir in the minds of men to fight the sombre destiny that hangs over humanity.' Mr. Joad believes: 'The innumerable currents of advanced opinion in the post-war world have tended of recent years to flow together into a more or less homogeneous stream. There is, in fact, a certain *crystallization* of progressive thought.' The F.P.S.I. was formed in 1932. And this book results from the fact that 'a number of those who were considered to possess special knowledge of, or familiarity with, the various subjects enumerated in the F.P.S.I. Basis were invited to contribute . . . to a Federation Manifesto, each taking as the text of his contribution the relevant passage from the Basis'. One conscientious worker in the Socialist League has described it as 'a plea for collective futility'. An impartial critic must reject such sweeping denunciations. But the phrase is not merely felicitous. And certainly, since the F.P.S.I. professes a fairly immoderate hue of Socialism, a socialist critique of its aims and methods is the most pertinent.

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The first criticism then is that the F.P.S.I., while professing the politics of the Massenmensch, refuses to be, or to work within, a mass movement. A variety of eminent persons is displayed here, writing very competently on Economics, Peace, Education, Psychology and other decidedly public matters; yet it is all a configuration of intellectuals, acknowledging mass necessity, urging mass ideology, but performing highly individual pieces of cerebration without reference to tactical needs as understood (if understood) by what mass party there is in this country – the Labour Movement, presumably. Something of a sham here or at least self-deception: in Eleusis there was good excuse for two grades of Mysteria, but there can be none where mass interests are explicitly placed first.

The tactics of the F.P.S.I., in fact, are those of organized evasion. It is an insulated minority, pursuing its research and propaganda exclusively as such and coming to no terms with other organizations designed to prosecute the same declared ends. And this unacknowledged esotericism it shares, be it noted, with the Communist Party, which also it rejects. In other matters, however, its model is rather those organizations revolving about an economic theory, of which Douglas Social Theory is the chief and most intelligent. This is not an irrelevant aside on matters out of hand: Social Credit represents a consistent attitude based on such belief, but it is not possible for Marxian socialists – of which the

F.P.S.I. supposes itself chiefly composed – to believe that any theoretical scheme, however comprehensive, can be imposed from above. The trouble with this book, in fact, from its own declared standpoint, is that it is altogether too rational to be useful.

And Mr. Joad is dimly aware of it: 'In this reliance which it places on human reason the attitude of the F.P.S.I. is unfashionably old-fashioned. It is even Victorian': but hopes to clear himself of the reproach by a delicate sarcasm. As a fact, most of the attitudes cultivated and the beliefs urged in this book are relics of nineteenth-century rationalism, and the general theory is Benthamite: which does not accord too well with Mr. Joad's late conversion to forms of Oriental Mysticism.

And the subsidiary contributors? A lot of quiet fun might be had with some of them. But, quite simply, they exemplify the above general statement in matters of detail: one knows beforehand what each will say, and the anticipation is monotonously right. Prof. Flugel expounds, but with a dash of Adler, the Psychology at present taught in training colleges and links on thus with the Education thesis of Mr. Olaf Stapledon, who would like to see all our children extensively expressing themselves in arts and crafts. Mr. Archibald Robertson writes on The Church in a manner reminiscent of Gladstone and the Gadarene swine, and Miss Janet Chance, quietly earnest about contraceptives and abortion, speaks with considerable passion about

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the divorce laws, and offers us such an intensely healthy kind of Sex that we hardly restrain ourself from banging our spoon and shouting for more and more dark gods.

Mr. Joad's anthology is scarcely concerned with literature at all. Dr. Leavis's, culled from *Scrutiny*, which he edits, is almost nothing but. Apart, however, from the fact that *Scrutiny* has an educational policy (criticized in the May issue of this paper) and a declared sociological function, there is considerable basic similarity between *Discriminations* and *Manifesto*. Both present groups of thoughtful and highly sophisticated people, assuring themselves of social effectiveness and canvassing heavily the urgent, the desperate need for more people to stand where they stand and practise the same kinds of cerebral activity: something apocalyptic, yet of a tranquil dignity.

And both are aristocracies, yet vaguely concerned with mass salvation: both occupy equivocal positions. Dr. Leavis having proved conclusively, on more than one occasion, that there is no public intelligence, he and his friends accordingly are spared the necessity of catering for it. Lulling their consciences thus, and their refined sensibilities, they are able to cultivate without scruple the attitudes (and practise without restraint the activities) which they personally find most agreeable and, at the same time, while enjoying the prestige of despising it, to believe that they are as functionally effective in society as persons of in-

telligence and taste can at present be. Those, the Progressives, get together, according to the ideal of Progress, to save Civilization – Oxford groups of the higher political life. Oxford groups of the intellectual life, storm troops of Discrimination – these, the Scrutinizers, get together to save Culture. As both march past, we should like to raise a cheer, but we are prevented: each has made a corner in both benevolence and intelligent enthusiasm.

These reservations being made, however, an implied lack of responsibility being acknowledged, and the almost hysterical avoidance of any display of the sentiments being accepted as a virtue – *Determinations* must be called a book worth reading. *Scrutiny* itself has a significant contemporary function, if only as a stalking-horse, an instance offered to the purposes of existing casuistries: it offers material alike for Marxian and Aquinian, yet is at its most discerning as a critic of either. And these essays are good scrutiny, or most of them are. If nothing more, they are an excellent corrective to the sheer ineptitude of current literary academics, the kind to which they most clearly belong.

Mr. James Smith, for instance, on the Metaphysicals is vastly better than a professional exegesis of Johnson's well-meaning essay, though he can point out with complete solemnity that 'a bed has many and varied associations'. Modern psychology has greatly extended the scope of literary criticism, and Mr. Smith is not the only contributor to make a fairly adequate use

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of this added subtlety, without direct recourse to its terms. Mr. D. W. Harding's Note on Nostalgia would have been impossible without those terms, and his evaluation of I. A. Richards displays at least as much familiarity as his indefatigable subject with psychological principles. Dr. Leavis himself on Swift and Mr. L. C. Knights on Comedy cover similar ground with much and equal distinction and are both convinced that 'Comedy is essentially a serious activity', while Dr. Leavis brings Mr. Aldous Huxley's analysis to a logical extreme by shewing us a Swift hopelessly emotional: 'He certainly does not impress us as a mind in possession of its experience. We shall not find Swift remarkable for intelligence if we think of Blake.'

The best piece of work in the book is undoubtedly Mr. William Empson's short note on Marvell's *Garden*. But Mr. Empson's mind is different from that of the other scrutinizers: he works at greater heat, we feel, and, for all his seeming pedantries, is less of the academician. He takes that rare poem and toys with it for ten pages, and at the end all its facets have a harder, clearer shine: an act which strikes us as the best kind of critical act. Mr. John Speirs is good on Burns as the constructor of an insulated and highly sophisticated world of comedy. Mr. W. A. Edwards writes on Webster in the best Eliot manner. And Mr. Denys Thompson, not forgetting that his special vocation is for pedagogics, brings much deeply felt severity to a

decarbonization of Lamb, which, if a trifle unkind, is grateful enough after the indiscriminate enthusiasms of Mr. E. V. Lucas.

THE RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

THE RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH
RULE IN INDIA. EDWARD THOMP-
SON and G. T. GARRATT. MAC-
MILLAN. 21s.

To state that this will become a classic of Indian history would underestimate its importance and possibly discourage many from reading it. For classics are too often books which we mean to read one day, whereas this is a book to be read now, and read as much for enjoyment as for instruction. Indian history in the round has repelled many, partly because of the strangeness of names and partly because it generally lacks unity. For instance British India grew in at least three almost independent settlements. Again, while in the earlier phases of British India there is adventure and glory in plenty, even though a suspicion soon grows that it was all very like Chinese anarchy of our own time, in its later phases its history tends to become a catalogue of battles, annexations and governor-generalships, in which an episode like the Mutiny is a welcome interlude. Add to such disadvantages the fact that, since the days of the Nabobs, Anglo-Indians have been notorious hoers, and

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you have some justification for the unhopeful comment of the Duke of Wellington with which our authors preface their task: 'The real truth is that the public mind cannot be brought to attend to an Indian subject' The more credit, then, to them that they have succeeded in making their history as good reading as biography at its best. No doubt the frequent and judicious use made of contemporary letters and memoirs has gone a long way towards heightening the colour, but it also seems to recapture something of the atmosphere in which our rude forefathers worked out East. That is an essential preliminary to a proper understanding of the conquest. For it is idle to judge the soldiers and merchants of those days either by standards of to-day, or even by those of contemporary England. Indian writers, Bengali in particular, persist in writing of Mogul India as if it had been under the dispensation of the League of Nations in its prime. A further advantage of the contemporary document is that history thereby regains its humour. Readers must judge for themselves; but neither the unconscious irony of quotations or the shrewd asides of the authors impair the solidity of construction which marks the work as a whole. It is a pity that contemporary pictures and prints are not also drawn on.

The feature which differentiates this history from its predecessors, and must affect every serious writer who follows, is the attitude adopted by the authors towards India. It is not merely that they are sympathetic, nor even

that they endeavour to be impartial – in the literal sense, an impossibility – the essential difference between this and every previous history is that the authors have in view from the commencement the ultimate development of India itself, not Great Britain made greater by her Indian dominions, nor even Anglo-India at all. Such an attitude might seem to be an inevitable prelude to any study of the subject, but those who have read the many histories which exist, let alone the biographies and memoirs, will realize that it is just in this standard of values that our historians have failed us, and thereby led us to misunderstand contemporary Indian politics.

The title, 'Rise and Fulfilment', gives a warning of this change of viewpoint, but as we pass from one phase to another, then we find that we must inevitably form quite other judgments on the annexationist Viceroy, on frontier wars, on the Mutiny itself and on the heyday of patriotism – Anglo-India's golden age – than those we passed unconsciously at school. The Mutiny is described with fairness to both sides and, though Mr. Thompson's monograph will already have prepared the ground, the hysterical brutality of the repression will probably shock most English readers. We are entitled to be proud of our record in India, but the Mutiny should humble our pride if ever it grows excessive. It is idle to gloss it over, for from it sprang race consciousnesses and hatreds which in due course begat the nationalist movement. The rise of Congress, so

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small a cloud that Viceroys as late as Curzon scoffed at its impotent rhetoric, becomes in the latter half of the history the dominant, ever-recurring theme, until the wrangles of departments, punitive Missions and the pomp of Durbars sink into insignificance beside the not very bold schemings of obscure teachers and lawyers. The tale ends at 1934, in one of the periodic lulls, in an interlude of White Papers and Memoranda. What the immediate future holds the authors are not called on to prophesy – though the federal experiment is clearly the only one in which they see hope of peaceful development. The British rule in India is not yet fulfilled. Perhaps retribution is yet to come.

BROKEN RECORD

BROKEN RECORD: REMINISCENCES. By
ROY CAMPBELL. Boriswood. 7s. 6d.

'In the arena at Istres when I was tossed for the first time I saw the whole audience hanging upside down, the sky underneath, and two aeroplanes between my feet.' The repeated impact of such experiences as this could hardly fail to furnish a person of Mr. Campbell's susceptibilities with a curious and unusual view of his contemporaries. 'I am presenting an outsider's point of view: you may take it as that of a pre-victorian man, or of a pagan who never was put through any mill except that of the pre-industrial European culture, of an equestrian, slightly feudal type, a sort of inhabitant of the moon. . . .'

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In fact Mr. Campbell is, in the double sense, what Mr. Wyndham Lewis has recently described as an *Outsider*. (Technically: 'what seems to have annoyed the critics is that I am *objective* instead of being only *subjective*.') As might be expected, Mr. Wyndham Lewis figures very prominently in these pages: 'I am only a banderillero in the cuadrilla of that great matador.' The views of these two great 'Outsiders' would be of as little interest to the pink-liberal world 'outside' them, as it is to them, if it were not for the fact that each is, in his way and degree, a very considerable (anti-artistic) artist, and an equally considerable (anti-individualistic) individual. And in this time-space of fashionable 'impersonality', the passions (hatreds and enthusiasms) of a genuine *individual* take on the rarity and value that the humble austerity of a Christ or Confucius might possess in the militantly anarchistic milieus of the Chaco, Chicago or China to-day. So this book, which seems to be merely 200 pages of gay gossip for a wet afternoon, and frankly described by its author as 'the record of an entirely selfish career, spent mostly in the sun, in dreaming, and in fanfaronnading,' is not only a significant 'document' but a pre-eminently *salutary* offensive. It is also unmistakably the prose of a poet, as opposed to the poetrescence of a common dreamer. There is nothing dark or mysterious about the Africa that Mr. Campbell so brilliantly describes here. Fortright, single-minded and uneven, like all interesting poets,

Campbell is, as Lewis is, a true 'Son of the Sun' – he has, as he boasts, 'added a few solar colours to contemporary verse'; and they certainly make many of our spectacular new versifiers look as pallid and precocious as sixth-form swots. Those who know that overlooked book *Snooty Baronet* will remember Bob McPhail, who could rig out 'grand swaggering stanzas, stuffed with barbarous imagery . . . knock-out couplets, packed with gun-cotton and poisoned epithets' because he had 'the repertory of the elements, gestures of violence, at his fingertips'. This book shows why: Mr. Campbell has the hunter's eye, which gives him that observation, of an almost psychic intensity, that must precede any natural, unforced command of objective draughtsmanship or writing; Poet, Individual and Equestrian as Mr. Campbell unquestionably is, can he be called *caballero*? It is only necessary to invoke the figure of R. B. Cunninghame Graham to realize how much Campbell is, at bottom, a barbarian. There is still a good deal of the raw Colonial about him – he makes of his provinciality a proud virtue, loves a good 'rag', lives perhaps *too* much in the hot thick of Action, the perennially impenitent 'hearty'. (He has numbered among his *métiers* not only bullfighting and horsebreaking, but eel-loading and dogstealing. Then he rides gliders, which must help him to see how puny and far beneath him the world is.)

One would expect the excesses of such a life to issue somewhere in his work in a romantic discharge: it may

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be detected in an occasional tone of voice that Campbell adopts. At certain moments of passion his utterance exhibits a quality which he himself would be among the first to condemn in others (especially if women) as 'hysterical'; though here it is the *opinions* expressed, and not their 'hysterical' expression, that is guaranteed to enrage the average 'intellectual' reader.

Mr. Campbell's dislikes are comprehensive, beginning with Progress, Liberty and Rights, embracing on the way all machinery, dogs and Jews in general, and finishing more specifically with such various phenomena as Charlie Chaplin and Lord Russell. Ninety per cent of these distastes are shared by, if not derived from, Mr. Lewis. But Mr. Campbell's views on (e.g.) Com-

munistism would carry more weight if he showed some evidence of understanding Marx as well as Mr. Lewis. (The orthodox Marxist knows exactly how to 'place' Mr. Campbell, of course; yet both Mr. Campbell and Mr. Lewis see deeper than the Marxist is permitted by his vows to look, and what they see is of some importance.) The book is half manifesto, half reminiscence, both halves having been 'worked up' a bit, for effect. On the whole, the autobiographical parts are the more interesting – the rest being just pills for a sick intelligentsia. It is full of good yarns, some tall, but no taller than you might expect from a tall and 'vertical' poet, who makes an enemy of the whole horizontal world.

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SECRETS OF NATURE

SECRETS OF NATURE. By MARY FIELD
and PERCY SMITH. Faber & Faber.
12s. 6d.

THE cinema is the instigator of visual magic. The black magic of the *sur-réaliste* film is opposed by the white magic of those 'documentaries' that faithfully present the actual appearance of things and happenings, untampered with by any plot or preconceived extraneous purpose. The authors of *Secrets of Nature* have for many years been directing those fascinating films which bear that title. Under their guidance the camera has recorded, often for the first time, the growth of crystals, mould, moss, fungus, plants, seeds and the eggs of insects. Among the miraculous births of this century has been the birth of a third eye which can see not only at an infinitely less distance than the natural eye, as the microscope can, but at an infinitely less or greater speed. And when the vision of this third eye is reproduced for us upon the screen we are gratefully astonished, and even, at times, incredulous. These films have made 'stars' of the most unlikely subjects. The more pleasant and homely creatures, bears, penguins, monkeys and other entertaining inhabitants of the Zoo, are not nearly so interesting on the screen as those who are less conspicuous, and often not so well-behaved, such as the wicked cuckoo, the much-maligned toad, the gnat, the wood-wasp, the macabre spider and the praying mantis. The

camera has recorded and revealed the underlying rhythms and designs of life. Those violent passions that excited us in Rémy de Gourmont's *Natural Philosophy of Love* have been made visible. We have seen, too, how jelly-mould spreads in a scalloped unguent-wave, bursts, becomes starred, sends up tentacles and leaps forward; how bracken fronds curl upwards like the patterns of iron-work gates; how closely the heads of meagre tansy-flowers resemble the richly decorated wallpapers of the Empire period; and how the cheese-mite leaves its egg, becomes a four-legged nymph, develops sex, and finally reproduces itself in order to begin all over again. The 'Secrets of Nature' films are new, more vivid and more intimate records of the eternal circle in all its aspects. The book tells how they are made, and contains ninety magnificent photographs.

POUND STERLING

A B C OF READING. By EZRA POUND.
Routledge. 4s. 6d.

THE present book is intended to meet the need for fuller and simpler explanation of the method outlined in "How to Read" . . . The author hopes . . . to produce a text book that can also be read 'for pleasure as well as for profit' by those no longer in school; by those who have not been to school; or by those who in their college days suffered

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those things which most of my generation suffered.' When made by academic authority, dogmatic statements are cramping. They do not elucidate; they constipate, even if true. There is more truth in an artist's falsehoods than in tomes of pedagogic truisms; and even more mental stimulus.

Ezra Pound is not a professor but a performer, a poet writing of what he knows from within. His opinions are more absolute and more tentative than academic judgments, just because they are opinions which he does not want to foist on other people. His rule of reading is simple: read, see the words, sentences, and shape of a poem, hear its music, avoid preconceptions, read the lines before you read between them. More authors have been censured for not doing what they have not tried to do, than for doing badly what they have done. This, as Mr. Pound, states, is so easy to state that few recognize how difficult it is to perform. More prefer the ease of what is superficially more difficult.

A B C of Reading also propounds a course of reading, poems and prose, by which the rest of literature may be judged. The basis of this selection is personal. 'I am, after all these years, making a list of books that I still reread; that I keep on my desk and look into now and again.' Two rules are given for judging poetry 'Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.' And singability! These two are not reconciled. No one could call Donne's *Extasie* 'singable'.

Mr. Pound's list is interesting, but it cannot be used as the basis for a beginner's reading. It embraces Chinese, Greek, Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon, as well as English. He himself, 'a specialist getting on towards his fiftieth year', has compiled this list over a long period. The effect of administering it in youth would be entirely different. He himself says it is impossible to understand what one has not experienced in part; to expect such understanding in school boys and undergraduates, at any rate in this country, where emotional maturity comes late, would be unreasonable, even apart from the linguistic difficulties. For Mr. Pound to say that the poetry of the classics is intelligible in translation is untrue. He admits that there are no adequate translations of the Greek. But 'you can get Ovid or rather Ovid's stories in Golding's *Metamorphoses*', and 'those who don't read Latin can get their Virgil in olde Scots.' Whether translating is to convey fact or feeling from one tongue to another, Golding was a bad translator. Ovid's stories were not his own, and his attitude to verse was not Golding's. Again, Gavin Douglas's *Aeneid*, has no resemblance to Virgil. Whatever its merits, they are not those of the original. Mr. Pound would have been better advised to abandon the pretence of writing a text book and avow that he was writing of the books he likes best.

His underlying thesis is that the insularity of English literature is bad. Chaucer's continentalism, his feeling of

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England as part of Europe and his familiarity with Italian, classical and Provençal writers appeals more to Mr. Pound than the breadth of human sympathy of which this was the intellectual equivalent. As who should pit Tolstoy against Dostoievski, he belabours Shakespeare's insight with Chaucer's visual sense, and attacks the drama because in drama, acting, not poetry, satisfies the eye and words are left to portray thought and emotion. This virtue of the play he considers vice; yet he sees no weakness in a song's dependence upon music.

Though *A B C of Reading* is directed now to the intending reader, now to prospective writers, now to the world at large, though simple words are printed in huge capitals to make meaning clear, and words like 'katachrestical' intrude to obscure it, though French quotations are translated, but Italian ones are not, and though the prominence given to Douglas, Golding and Boyd is due more to their being popularly unknown than to their outstanding merit, much in this book is penetratingly true and needed to be written: one feels the author wrote it 'for pleasure, as well as for profit'.

Exhibit: primer for Dr. Leavis. 'Gloom and solemnity are entirely out of place in even the most rigorous study of an art originally intended to make glad the heart of man.'

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THE CRITERION

A Quarterly Review

Edited by T. S. ELIOT



IN THE
JULY (1934) NUMBER

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Reviews

able *a priori* assertions combined with a number of remotely relevant allusions. And in 'The Scottish Nationalist Movement' he attacks the popular conception of Scots Nationalism, and makes some general, and again not appreciably relevant, remarks regarding the superiority of intelligent minorities, and (nevertheless) the readiness of the people to appreciate the right stuff if only it is given to them. There is also much general abuse of cultural 'middlemen' who spoil everything by talking down to the people, and endeavouring to explain things which should never be explained.

In his fierce indictments of the English tradition in Scottish life and letters, Hugh Macdiarmid is led to embrace a fallacy to which he clings with wilful tenacity. He believes that the Celtic and Lowland Scots traditions in Scotland are really one tradition, and can be combined to combat the evil English influence. The plain fact is, however, that the Lowland Scots tradition, however unique and self-sufficient it may have been at one period, is a branch of the wider English tradition, and has no more natural affinity with the Celtic tradition than any other branch. Consider the development of Lowland Scots language and literature. Middle Scots, the earliest defined stage in the development of the Scottish literary language, began as a dialect identical with the Northumbrian dialect in England, being actually referred to by early Lowland Scots writers as 'Inglis', the name 'Scots' being used to denote the

foreign speech of their foreign Gaelic neighbours. The division between Lowland and Gaelic Scot in speech, outlook, and general tradition, continued right through Scottish history. It was accentuated, not lessened, by the Wars of Independence, and by the later attempts of the Stuart kings to bring the Highlands and Islands into complete subjection. Again, to take purely literary examples, the inspiration of both Henryson and Dunbar as well as of the later 'Scottish Chaucerians' was English and French entirely, with no trace of Gaelic influence. The last verse of Dunbar's 'Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis' shows what his attitude to the Highlander was.

In his constant association of Gaelic and Braid Scots 'Hugh Macdiarmid' ignores facts. English ascendancy in Lowland Scots literature does not represent the intrusive domination of an alien tradition. The fact here is simply that Scottish writers have often preferred to use the major tongue. It is unfortunate that many vigorous dialect words should have been allowed to fall completely out of use, as it is unfortunate that Northumbrian or Devonshire dialect words should have been lost. It is reasonable to bewail the increasing standardization of English, but ridiculous to regard English language and literature as representing a 'foreign' tradition in non-Celtic Scotland. As regards Gaelic Scotland, Hugh Macdiarmid's complaint is justified. Here we have had a valuable and vigorous native language and literature completely stifled, to be

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September 1934

Open Eye in Bali and Java

by Stella Benson

I

JULIET and I are at the chief officer's table. He is as one imagines the Dutch – stout, pink, and hairless – very Teutonic, one would say. But it is noticeable that he moves more quickly inside his flesh than one expects a German of this type to move; his eyes are lively in their slit-sockets; his understanding arrives promptly; he speaks excellent idiomatic English. The captain has a nice, ugly, unfinished face, and is very strikingly un-Teutonic, in being so deprecatory about his own people. The Dutch women on board seem to make a really deliberate effort to be unappealing; they wear stringbag caps upon their screwed, nothing-coloured hair; their wistful, unpowdered faces are straddled by tin-rimmed spectacles; they sit about the deck doing very hot-

looking and hideous fancy sewing – a kettle on a hob in crimson and mud-coloured woollen cross-stitch, for instance.

We crossed the equator very early in the morning, and my heart was wrung by an attempt by our solid Dutch captain to make a solid Dutch joke – when nobody was awake to enjoy it, except two American school-marms and me. He tiptoed roguishly from his bridge, finger on lip, whispering, 'Crossing de Line in three minutes – look out for the bomp.' His face fell when he saw how small was his audience. I, of course, at once began to wake up as many as I could during the three minutes – especially women with piercing voices who would squeak convincingly when the bomp (whatever it was) occurred. I got

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quite a good showing out in their pyjamas, before the captain, from his bridge, fired a little gun. We all uttered a very satisfactory scream of feminine terror. But the persons who were the most startled (I was delighted to see) by the sound of the gun were four whales, who chose that exact minute to come up and breathe, quite close by; evidently imagining themselves to be under fire, they lost their heads completely – wallowed frothily about, and spewed up crooked, spasmodic fountains of spray. I am *extremely* fond of whales. They have much the same appeal as elephants, I think – only perhaps a little more sombre. While we were playing deck-tennis, we saw a whale quite close to the ship. It lay on the surface of the water, and for a few minutes I thought it was dead. I was quite startled by my own feeling of intense joy when it changed its position, put up a black, square nose and blew a leisurely fountain, waved majestically along for a little way, then – raising its tail slowly and luxuriously into the air – dived and disappeared. For hours after that I was so very happy that I had to keep on asking myself why – and each time I remembered; it was because I had thought that the world had lost a whale – and I had been gloriously mistaken.

We arrived at Makassar and went ashore for the day. A very neat, pink-and-white place; the roofs are red and crinkled and steep – I suppose like Dutch roofs. The junks of these seas are very gay in clear pinks and

blues on white – much more yacht-like than our raffish, rusty Chinese junks. The smaller vessels here have curious striped sails, square in shape, but rigged askew, so that they seem to be diamond-shaped; they are always striped in three bright colours and fly a little whip-thin flag from one corner. Wandering about the wharf, we came to a blind alley, and so had to cross the water in a very wobbly dug-out canoe, hollowed from a round log and completely wanting in poise. Malays seem to choose their clothes for beauty rather than sense; the designs of scarves and sarongs were wild, and favourite combinations of colour were magenta and puce – puce and purple – magenta and scarlet – lemon-yellow and orange – discords that are almost an acquired taste to our eyes, as quarter-tones in Oriental music are to our ears. We drove to a waterfall – Makassar's only officially recommended 'sight.' The country looked raggle-taggle and poor; a mangey crop of maize seemed to be the only visible crop – though I am told that all these groves are rich in spices. The thing I chiefly noticed was the prevalence of blond buffaloes in the fields. In China, blond buffaloes are said to be usually savage, but in Makassar they seemed mild though fair; this, as I explained to Juliet (who accepted the information with thoughtful politeness), is because the Dutch are such a blond race. I liked the peasant houses of Makassar; all are built on stilts and brightly painted in stripes and squiggles and zig-zags; all – except the very

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poorest – made a brave show of gaudy curtain in the two front windows – each curtain stretched very taut and corseted into a wasp waist, with a coloured band. The plain we drove over had evidently once been under water, for the mountains that surrounded it were obviously only sea-cliffs strayed inland; they were deeply scored, beetling precipices – clothed now in green close-woven jungle – neatly rising in an abrupt line from neat flatness. We drove into mazy fiords in these cliffs, and came to the waterfall – a discreet glass strip of shady water slipping from a high wooded ravine into a rather self-conscious concretified pool.

We arrived at Bali. At sunset we drove down to the sea and had a most enchanting hour walking about picking up cowries and corals, trying to help crabs to make their holes, and watching the fishing canoes set out for their night's fishing. These canoes are simply hollowed logs; each has a sort of skeleton wing – rather like an aeroplane's – sticking out on one side only. The wing, which has floats on its tip, keeps the canoe balanced – but not perfectly. To launch these canoes without mishap was evidently a very delicate business. Each fisherman waded about in the immensely wide wash of the waves, pushing his canoe to and fro in water just deep enough to keep it afloat. The waves came rolling surfly in from a very long way out; in the diminishing light, one could hardly see the distant line where the waves broke. After long watching, I realised

that the fishermen must wait, restraining their restive canoes, until a suitable wave comes – perhaps once in every hundred waves. The desired wave is one which provides an exceptionally long and foamless pull-out, and is not closely followed by another, foamier, wave. The canoeist needs to be sucked out by a long retreating wave, and arrive in deep water before he meets the next wave; the next wave must be smooth and unbroken, so that his craft can rise over this first hurdle in a sort of slow motion bucking leap. The fishermen were absolutely patient during this long waiting, and showed no sign of relief when at last the right kind of wave appeared and they could step into their captious craft and be sucked suddenly into the dark. Coming home in a darkness broken here and there by the flares of villages, we came to a village engaged in a dancing show – hardly a show, perhaps, for no one was watching; each member of the audience was obviously waiting for his turn to perform. A young 'girl' (represented by a boy) was the only constant performer; it seemed that she was receiving proposals from a series of lovers. She was dressed in a long green silk sarong, white silk jacket, and a tall head-dress with two stiff paper chrysanthemums sticking straight up from it. She seemed to dance in a dream, sliding her bare feet on the beaten earth; her eyes slid in her expressionless painted face with quick blind glances that never for a second seemed to meet the glaring glances of the lovers who postured before her. The lovers, who came on

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one by one, and danced much more crudely and frantically than the 'maiden', swooped in wide circles which brought them closer and closer to the star, till finally they were dancing nose to nose, squatting or shuffling or wriggling their hips in a synchronised *pas-de-deux* – yet never for a moment did the 'maiden's' eyes meet those of a lover. Some lovers danced cleverly, others deliberately farcically (raising loud laughter) – but village dancing, whether meant to be serious or funny, seems to be largely a waggling of the behind.

After dinner we saw some professional Balinese dancing. Two little girls danced first – dressed – very brilliantly – exactly alike, in swathed silks and gaudy tinsels, with embroidered breastplates and architectural head-dresses of gilt and flowers. They danced kneeling; only the arms, heads, torsos, and eyes danced – but the eyes most of all. It was really eye-dancing; the eyes sprang from surprise to surprise. There was one use of the eyes that occurred again and again – one that I shall always remember as typical of Balinese dancing; it was a languishing, sinking glance that fell dreamily downward – and then froze suddenly into an intensely startled sharp stare; a quick up-glance followed – then a quick glare down again, as though to confirm the fact that there really *was* a scorpion on the floor. It was oddly bird-like – hawk-like – that eye-dance, and extraordinarily clear-cut and perfect. If one tries to move one's own eyes with absolute precision – to

separate accurately the phases of such a series of glances – one realises at once the perfection of *crispness* necessary. After the little girls, a young man danced, wearing only a gold circlet round his head and a crimson and gold sarong. He also danced upon his knees, with strong, studied movements of the arms and trunk; presently he galloped about on his knees, yet – even while leaping up and down on his bottom – contrived to look as lithe and exquisite as a leopard. The music was extremely resonant; a honeyed tinkling, very lively in rhythm, ran up and down on a background of bells so deeply sonorous that they seemed to be heard with the inner skullbones rather than with the ears.

We drove to see some sacred monkeys in a sacred grove. They felt privileged to pull at our skirts and hands for food – not frightened by the fact that the sacred grove was clamorous with the building of a new temple. Shouts and hammerings drove out whatever sacredness had ever been there – but perhaps it will come back, when the gods move into their new house. I was interested in the outrageously bullying manner of the monkey grandfather – no female or baby monkey was allowed to eat in his presence. I had supposed that in all the more dignified animals – except man – the bullying by the male of the female is not seen. Tigers, I think, do not bully tigresses; certainly dogs do not bully bitches – except according to individual whim. To-day's observation, however,

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tends to show that – among all classes, high and low, of the simian tribe – the craving to bully the female is fundamental. But, again, here is an example of feminine triumph. The most characteristic objects in a Balinese village are the fighting-cocks – grand, brilliant, fiercely unhappy – imprisoned in small wicker cages which allow them only just room to turn round. The cages are set out in the sun to give the poor birds air and to increase their ferocity by giving them glimpses one of another. The mere egg-laying poultry rabble struts free about the cages; a hen will even sometimes perch upon the hero's cage, flapping and flaunting, boasting of the advantages of domestic obscurity. Is there perhaps a lesson to us all here – how to deal with our diehard major-generals?

II

We drove to two very ancient Hindu places this morning. One was a god's burrow under a low hill. We entered it through the mouth of a huge devilish stone face, and found a dank passage with a right-angle turn, and a neglected altar, seen by the dramatic light of grass torches. The other ancient wonder was only reached by a very arduous, slippery climb down into a ravine with a river at the bottom. On either bank of the river was a terrace dominated by huge urn-shapes – thirty feet high or so – carved in the living cliff in high relief, framed in deep niches in the rock. On one bank were the ruins of a monastery –

roughly squared caves, and boulders so ancient that weeds had almost swallowed them up. Mosses obliterated the leering faces once carved in the stone. It was all, I thought, too ancient to be interesting; a great deal connected with Hinduism seems to me too ancient to be interesting. I know nothing whatever about it, of course, but I have a rash intuitive idea that the Hindu religion really *isn't* subtle – whatever the intellectual tourists may tell us – it is just inconceivably fantastic, being the creation of thousands of generations of unthinking, frightened people. Upon the really not at all subtle mystery of the phallus has been balanced an unthinkable tottering pile of ritual, continually added to by terrified, unreasoning people. The resulting boundless tangle of self-tortures, frenzied shibboleths, morbidities and complexities is, I suggest, really no more wonderful than the similar emotional structures of a child, who from one wholly unfounded terror (say, a nightmare about a blue-tailed sheep) will travel further and further away from reason, on a path of morbid perversity that actually is not worth the attention of a reasoning mind – except *as* perversity. When such a structure is already in existence, it is, of course, easy for religious tourists to step in and – finding the thing ready-made before them – base mystical profundities upon it in order to justify the human fancy that created it; but does this apology really make sense of a thing that has been assembled by *non-sense*? If you put a thought into the

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hands of unthinking people, and leave it there for ten thousand generations, does it not lose its content? Must we always go on considering it as if it were a thought? I suppose that in a million years Christianity may reach the stage that Hinduism has now reached. It may very well be, surely, that by then the nose of Saint Peter's Aunt will have entirely overshadowed and obliterated the other Christian facts, and this nose will be the foundation of a complete Nose-Mysticism. This will be the result of leaving Christianity in the hands of millions of uncomprehending persons, but there will always be intellectual apologists found to claim immemorial wisdom for the practice (say) of painting the nose pea-green or of worshipping the Adenoid.

Balinese Hinduism, by the way, though rooted in prehistoric dimness, is now rather a menaced growth. The Dutch authorities forbid missionaries to land on the island, but actually the fatal seed has been sewn. We were invited by some travelling surreptitious missionaries – Chinese and American – (might I not call them spiritual boot-leggers?) – to go and see some secret Christians. Our surprised, righteously heathen chauffeur drove us towards the rebel village, and on the way the missionaries talked to us about Hindu 'immorality' and 'cruelty.' A Hindu practice frowned upon by Christians, we were told, is the practice of shutting up the most treasured householder of a village in a dark cave at seeding time, and keeping him there on a minimum of food until the harvest is gathered.

Many have died under this treatment, it seems, and yet the Balinese can hardly bring themselves to discontinue an agricultural method which, in their simple view, has yielded excellent results throughout the ages. As luck will have it, crops tended by Christian methods have not been so successful. The missionaries told us that the Balinese were very immoral; the Sanctity of Home Life, we were told, was not appreciated on the island. In the missionaries' view, the Dutch authorities, while refusing to allow Christians to influence the islanders for the Good, permit tourists to influence them for Evil. The pictorial tourist appeal, we were reminded, always emphasises the fact that Balinese women wear no clothes above the waist. We arrived at the village at last, and were most heartily greeted by the illicit elect, whose women all wore jackets clutched together in front by the decent but disappointing safety-pin. A loud horn was blown to call Christians in from the fields and the forest. Great activity wracked the village; everyone began to wash and to don Sunday sarongs; the 'church' (a little raised pavilion by the village gate) was cleared of dogs, and to a certain extent of fleas; new mats were spread, and four Windsor chairs, a glass tumbler, a table, and two texts in Balinese, were brought out from some hoard. Meanwhile we walked about the village, and I tried to sow the seed of a Mission to Balinese Dogs, severely calling an old Christian lady's astonished attention to the hairless

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skeleton barking voicelessly at her door. In, or rather *on*, this old lady's home I was invited to sit down, being tired. It was nothing but a rush mat – double-bed size – suspended by grass ropes under a peaked thatched roof. Close beside the pillow (curiously enough) was a beehive – a section of hollow log suspended from the eaves and dangling in the same relation to the pillow as a reading lamp would in a Nordic home. An uncomfortable idea, I thought, watching the bees preen themselves upon the pillow, but, of course, there may be times when one wants a spot of honey at night. Frenzied tootlings now called us to the church. We travelling saints sat on the Windsor chairs; about thirty Christians sat on the rush floor – at first men in the middle and women round the edge, but gradually women seemed to grow, like tares amid the corn, among the men on the central mat, and even a few babies sprouted there. The heathen stood about outside, laughing kindly at our pious preparations. The singing was appallingly hearty, and each hymn seemed to have several score verses. The Chinese visitor preached in Malay, and a village headman translated what he said into Balinese. When the American traveller preached, he did so in Cantonese to the Chinese, who handed it on in Malay to the headman, who passed it on in Balinese to the congregation. Juliet and I were invited to say a few words, and, had we consented to do so, we should have spoken in English to the American, who would have trans-

lated our words into Cantonese to the Chinese, who would have presented them in Malay to the headman, who would finally have delivered them in Balinese to the parched flock – so perhaps it was fortunate that we remained silent.

The headman and the few men round him were passionately attentive to all that was said; looking at them, I realised that Christianity really was to them a very exciting, new, dangerous youthful gospel – not at all the out-talked older-and-wiser doctrine it seems to me. These men are in the same glamorously dangerous position as the early Christians in their catacombs were, more or less; and I daresay that our homespun evangelists are no more stuffy than, perhaps, Saint Peter seemed to supercilious Romans. We come at the end of the idea, I think, but these Balinese come at the beginning. Hitlerism arouses in the young German – Communism in the young Russian – the same feeling, I imagine, of being *in at the start of something good* – as Christianity does here.

From the few words of the American missionary's talk that were translated to me, I gathered that it expressed that rather Uriah Heep spirit that so often informs mission talk. That the American – a rather intelligent, initiating man – should harp on this babe-and-suckling stuff seems to me insulting to Christianity. Why should a teacher claim to be untaught? Why should Christianity be advertized as being so easy that its exponents have to pretend to be fools in order to show that any

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fool can start level. Surely the missionaries would not claim that theirs was a gospel for fools only – one that must not be expected to stand up to the challenge of reason. It seems that missionaries say, in effect, ‘Look here, you chaps, I’m just one of yourselves, quite simple, just like you. To be a Christian, the more babyish and sucklingesque you are, the better – don’t for heaven’s sake run away with the idea that I’m any more grown-up than you are. . . .’ I believe I am right in saying that the Protestant churches are the only ones that seem to encourage its teachers and pastors deliberately to disclaim wisdom or authority. Yet how can the poor Balinese learn anything if saints only travel thousands of miles to tell them that saints are no wiser than themselves?

Interest began to flag in the outer fringes of the congregation presently, and several Christians began to catch lice in each other’s hair, an obviously absorbing sport that leaves little attention free for matters of the soul. A certain fluster was caused by the principal lady Christian of the village, who, after long search, appeared with four tumblers and a freshly opened coconut on a tray. This burden was handed up from hand to hand over the heads of the congregation during a long prayer, and had just reached the altar when the shocked headman noticed it, and dismissed it as an irreverent intrusion. So it was handed back again, from hand to hand, and had hardly reached the justly irritated lady Christian – when the prayer suddenly ended, and

the tray embarked once more on its journey to the altar. The lady then bustled happily up, and decanted the coconut into the tumblers. How many farewells – especially Oriental farewells – are spoiled by this Deoch-and-Doris habit. What countless travellers, since travelling first began, must have said, ‘Well, good-bye, and thank you so much for a pleasant afternoon,’ while fighting against nausea. I wonder what the Corinthians offered Saint Paul? . . .

III

We started off early, Juliet and I, sharing a car by arrangement with a Dutchman – van X. – whom we had not met before this moment. Our Dutchman seemed from the first to be volatile and meretricious; everything that he said was obviously said to make a ‘picturesque gypsy’ impression. He told us almost before the car had had time to get into high gear that he had travelled all over Tibet ‘to escape’. ‘What from?’ asked Juliet and I. ‘From myself, ladies. An impossible task.’ He had travelled all over Ireland, on a similar errand, and had, he said, great sympathy with that race of poets and fools, the Irish – being a bit of a poet and a fool himself. The English, he added – a race of vulgar materialists – would never understand poets. I said that this did not seem to me a very wise remark – *by* a Dutchman – *of* the Irish – *to* two members of a race which had kept up a continuous roar (so to speak) of major poetry for almost a thousand years. He spoke quickly,

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inaccurately, in a blow-away manner, about everything. He prides himself, I am sure, on being mercurial. He told us he was a famous short-story writer, and I can imagine that he would write efficient smart-aleck stories – pseudo-cynical – pseudo-tender. He gave us a great deal of information about the country we were passing through – but no doubt it was all inaccurate.

We drove along a mountain road. The air became fresher and fresher, and finally really bitterly cold. We got up into the tea region. From this day forward I love *tea* country. Tea-gardens seem so generous and yet so orderly, the green grass so carefully barbered on all approaches; not a cockroach could trespass, it seems. Trees with pale steel-grey or ivory-white trunks grew out of the rows of smooth tea-plants, adding to the dreamlike, almost stagey, limelight effect. It was like a fairy forest – but *not* wild; neat, as a truly wild thing, like a tiger or a snake, often is. Even if I never see tea-gardens again I shall remember them always, as a hunger, and, at the same time, a satisfaction. Sometimes I think that to be *clean-cut* is the only beauty and the only truth. I am myself often confused, but I hunger for ideas with clean edges – words with clean edges; I like to have even commonplaces like the time of day fitted neatly into my knowledge – hence my morbid passion for watches, and my horror of losing sight of what time it is. I think it is always failure to be clean-cut that offends me about people; I am dispro-

portionately offended by frayed speaking or thinking; I want to say, 'How can you bear to proceed on such-and-such a line when it is clear that this line, if extended, would lead away from sense. If you say *A* you must also think *B, C, D*, etc. – all the way to *Z* if your brain can compass it. How can you be content to say *A* only?' The tea-gardens seemed to soothe this captiousness in me. I think, however, that their effect of exquisite lucidity was largely due to the clean and exciting air – at between 6,000 and 7,000 feet. We drove through one huge old tea-garden which Mijneer van X. said was now almost exhausted, but had once been famous. Avenues of cryptomerias ran through it, and the house of the manager was a florid, rambling palace, peeling, scabby and mellow, with a hint of old nabob magnificence. It stood in a garden of gnarled old flowering trees, and everything in the garden was veneered with brilliant bougainvillea. (The puce of bougainvillea has an almost electric dazzle, like some chemically induced flare in a test tube.) The newer tea-gardens, while just as orderly and enchanting, were less pretentious; their managers lived in small spick-and-span bungalows designed for young men 'engaged to nice girls at home' – rather than for old domineering, hospitable, riotous, amusing old rascallions, with crushed wives, rows of Malay mistresses, and dozens of children of all shades of colour. The villages of the tea-pickers were very feudal-looking – regimented and numbered cabins, each containing a Malay family. The people

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were muffled up in gaily coloured and patterned silks, for it was very cold. The mist – light and broken and floating – did not really hide anything, even at the highest point of the road; it made the jungle more subtle, in a silver-shredded shadow. The highest region was the region of tree-ferns; the fronds – very pale in the mist – sprayed from a dewy brown stem; the core of the fern looked softly hairy and domed, like the crown of a grass-green baby monkey's skull. The mountainside was so steep that, driving with the head down, one could throw one's head right back and look, as it seemed, straight up into inconceivably matted jungle. Huge trees steeped from an almost perpendicular slope, packed and crushed and plaited together; cascades of thick lianas rolled down from monster nests of orchids. There was not an inch of earth or sky unoccupied; more than that, it seemed that every inch was watched by a waiting list of vegetation; there was *too much* – an appalling abundance. A tiger would have seemed nothing. Monkeys sat in modest, shivering rows on very high branches, their tails hanging down like little toy lianas.

Slices of distant sea were presently fitted into the ravines ahead of us, and we drove down into great heat, to the level of the rubber plantations. Rubber groves always look to me like young English woods; one vaguely expects bluebells – or perhaps primroses – on their soil.

We arrived, gasping with heat, at a little hotel on a seashore, and had a

rather shy, tentative swim in a sea said to be infested with big sting-rays. We were only stung by jellyfish. It was an odd sea; from the shore it looked calm and blue, but on entering it, one found that the smooth waves were actually startlingly tall; they rolled in, unbroken, from an immense distance, and they had immense spaces of very strong backwash between. If one didn't keep a wary eye seaward one was again and again knocked sprawling. Mijnheer van X. had by now taken a very strong fancy to Juliet; that gentle, cheerful girl was exhibited in the rôle of Heartless Jilt, and Mijnheer's self-consciously playful wallowings in the sea were meant to convey to us something like 'Let us be drunk and for a while forget. . . .'

The hotel gave us *Rijs-tafel* for luncheon – dozens of dishes on a foundation of rice; some of the dishes were excellent, notably the shellfish, and a kind of biscuit made of shrimps, and the vegetables – but one would have to learn to be selective before one really enjoyed *Rijs-tafel*.

After luncheon we started back – in the same order, though Juliet tried to bully me into sitting beside her Mijnheer and letting her sit beside the driver. The only point in which Mijnheer van X. and I agreed during the whole of that day was in our spontaneous anxiety to thwart this manoeuvre of Juliet's. During the drive home I – sitting by the driver and dreamily enjoying the jungle – thought, 'What curious illusions deafness gives one; if I were really to trust my defec-

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tive hearing I should suppose that Mijnheer was proposing to Juliet.' I seemed to hear the word *marry* repeated again and again – but, of course, it was impossible, as we had scarcely known Mijnheer four hours. Soon, however, I heard Juliet's gently jocose voice saying, 'Well, but if I were to marry you . . .' and I began to cough tactfully. My efforts were drowned in the self-consciously loud tragic reproaches of Mijnheer van X. 'You trifle with a man's deepest feelings,' he cried, and Juliet's voice – suddenly frosty – was also raised; 'Please, Mijnheer . . . I was joking . . . Of course, I thought you were joking. . . . I beg your pardon, but how could I possibly suppose . . .?' My throat became quite sore with tactful coughing. A long, chilly silence enveloped the back of the car after that.

Presently Mijnheer van X. began reproaching Juliet for the useless idle lives we women lead; 'as for him,' he said, 'give him £200 a year – enough, in fact, to provide him with good food, good wine, a good horse, a comfortable house in a good climate with a little sailing . . . it was all he wanted – but women complicate life so much.' I was stung into joining in this argument, though it was not addressed to me, and said that I thought his simple life would cost him at least £2,000 a year, and also that he could hardly have chosen two more single-hearted, ascetic or industrious women to reproach. Mijnheer was much shocked to hear my voice, suspecting that if I could hear him now, I might have heard his

earlier reverse. (But why propose to one lady within two feet of the nape of the neck of another?) Smarting, he began to tell us that he might possibly die soon; he had been ill lately, and the excitements of the day were likely to bring on a relapse, but whether he was referring to the *Rijs-tafel* or to being crossed in love, it is impossible to say. Under this menace, he began to discuss with Juliet the question of a life after death, so I returned to my enjoyment of the jungle and the tea-gardens, after hearing the argument begin as might be expected – with cheap rationalism on his side and gentle unreasoning conviction on hers.

We drove across the valley towards mountain sides cushioned with tree-tops – the green wadding pierced here and there by feathers of smoke rising from volcanic fissures. Papandajan, the tallest volcano, flew the bravest smoke-flag. Rivers of lava – black strips of deadness – lie across the valley in shapes of crawling ooze, frozen into stagnancy. We climbed up a very steep road, past scimitar rice-fields curved into the curves of the mountain – past fields of a very heavily scented grass which the people were harvesting and laying on the roads to dry – welcoming the pressure of our tyres on it. Above the field-level was the jungle again, with its tree-ferns, and huge trees so thickly clothed in orchids that each seemed deliberately arranged as a botanical exhibition. As we approached the place where the mountain is broken, the noise of steam grew louder and louder, and when we

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arrived it was impossible to hear each other's voices. A pipe has been stuck into the mountain, and steam rushes from it with such force that the top of the steam plume sweeps the sky and is lost to sight. Besides this rather prosaic work of man, there are hundreds of messy little works of the devil; steam swirls and shrieks everywhere, from under every boulder, and there are countless natural cauldrons of scummy, sulphur-smelling liquid, the surface of which is patterned with grisly bubbles and whorls. From underneath this mess, and from whatever dry cavities there were, came the most horrifying sounds of bumping and shaking and grunting, like something alive, mad with rage, trying to get out. One gets used to thinking the earth a passive thing – *now*, I wonder how we shall dare go on living on such a thin crust, just above such violence. In that region, however, nothing did live, at least I saw no insects, no birds, no mice, no monkeys – but there were plenty of flowers. The jungle was as full of leafy tentacles as ever; fingers of jungle clutched boulders actually lapped by the boiling sulphur; the fumes killed the leaves, and it seemed odd that they should not discourage the roots, or prevent the germination of seeds. There were several tiny cauldrons, and on one I put a pebble, which corked it up; thus I flattered myself that I had sown the seed of a terrific eruption a million years hence; not even a pin-sized bubble of such force, I was sure, could be repressed with impunity. It was strange, puzzling and hot, walking

in the jungle – and soon, when we realised the presence of leeches (for by now we had left the lifeless jungle behind) the walk became a nightmare. If one stood still for a moment, one could both see and hear the frightful creatures, walking, heel and toe, over the leaves towards one. And if a leech once caught hold, it was horrible to try to pull it off; it stretched like rubber. We were so long wrestling with leeches that the chauffeur came yodelling through the jungle to look for us.

Driving down into our own valley at last, I noticed that the sunset light picked out hundreds of threads and puffs of steam from cracks in our own mountains. One was nowhere on solid ground. But, on a wide strip of field between two lava rivers, the men and boys of the valley were kite-fighting. Hundreds of them squatted on lumps of lava rock, watching three or four kite-champions manoeuvre up and down the wind. Each tries to get into such a position that he can cut with his kite-string the string of a rival.

Up-to-date villagers, I notice, are sometimes too proud to wear sarongs; they cut their batik sarongs into trousers – a very unfortunate idea, I think. The patterns of cheap batik are usually very large and gaudy, and to see three quarters of a scarlet butterfly across a buttock, or a prancing gazelle wrapped about a shin, gives, to say the least, an unmanly impression.

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IV

Juliet and I arrived at the Grand Hotel —, and, swept off our feet by the enthusiasm of a Dutch head waiter, consented to have a real Grand *Rijs-tafel*. The second after consent had been wrung from us, a Javanese waiter clapped his hands once with a very startling detonation, and immediately an immense procession began winding in at the dining-room door; there were about twenty Javanese boys in single file, each carrying two dishes. One boy walked beside, as outrider or traffic manager; it was he who, after a rapid survey of the territory, decided where *used* boys, so to speak, should be parked, so as not to hamper the march of oncoming boys. It was all exceedingly solemn and impressive. The Dutchman stood by and told us which dishes to take, or rather (for he never advised us to miss any of the forty dishes) which dishes to take with caution. 'Ladies,' he would say, 'sometimes do not like this dish so much,' but as for me, I should never have had the heart to disorganise the procession by refusing any dish. I imagined one eager brown face clouding over if I were to offer to one of twenty waiters the invidious distinction of a refusal. So I took everything and insisted on Juliet's doing so too; towards the thirty-fifth dish the castle of food on my plate began toppling, but by then I did not really care if one or two odd herrings, chickens, pancakes, etc., fell to the floor. Two things occur to me about *Rijs-tafel*: first, that there seems to be

a well-established order or precedence; thus may one imagine that a system of promotion prevails? Is a likely boy, after several years of carrying corn-fritters and sardines, promoted at last to stuffed okras and devilled chicken, or, if unsatisfactory, graded to curried shrimps and meat-balls? Has the proud fellow who carries the great Rice Bowl at the head of the procession worked his way up gradually, throughout a *lifetime*, from mere peanuts at the tail? The other thought is, why do they not make the affair a little more perfect still, and have music and a drum-major to lead the file, and even, perhaps, a few dancers bounding with glad cries beside the procession?

The pleasure of *Rijs-tafel* was marred for Juliet and me by the almost morbid interest we took in a Dutch military banquet which was spread quite close to our table. When we had finished our own meal (about one-fortieth of what had been placed before us) we sat ordering coffee after coffee in order that we might still be there when the banqueters should appear. We visualised a set of rubicund, beery, Franz Hals subjects, rolling in, arm in arm, in a licentious row. At about ten a shy young corporal tiptoed in to see if everything looked all right; he fled on seeing a waiter looking at him. At 10.30 a few officers, pale and furtively sober, shuffled towards the table; they all quite obviously hated one another and sat down as far from one another as possible. After another long wait, some unhappy-looking women appeared, two or three at a

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time; they were dressed with careful hideousness; all were too stout, and therefore too rigidly corseted; the men obviously hated them even more than they hated each other; no banqueter stopped eating to greet a newcomer or to show her where to sit. No one spoke; no one ordered anything to drink; everyone ate desperately. Juliet and I were in special agony over one woman who knew no one at all—not even a fellow woman. She was more elaborately – yet even worse – dressed than the others, with little satin bows stuck all over her. I am sure she had looked forward breathlessly to this party; one could see that by her dreadfully premeditated clothes; but from first to last no one spoke to her at all, and Juliet and I imagined her going home to soak her pillow with tears. Towards midnight, the only self-confident person there, a little half-caste woman who had somehow mysteriously managed to become slightly drunk, insisted on dancing. The men next to her looked alarmed, like hunted gnus, but were obliged to submit. A few other couples dreadingly followed this revolutionary example, but the woman with the little bows all over still remained unspoken to. A few hours later, when I had gone to bed and to sleep, I was awakened by the happy sound of a chorus of male voices singing a German drinking song. My heart leapt with joy, and I looked out, expecting to see the banqueters, merry at last, rolling down the garden. But no. My window looked in at the dining-room windows, and I could see

the men of the party, detached, drooping, and still lamentably sober, sitting round a gramophone. The women had disappeared. Probably they had all died of sorrow.

Surely Dutchwomen could contrive to look a little more *heady*, so to speak, without sacrificing their virtue. Practically all the Dutchwomen in Java seem to be under the impression that ‘a touch of scarlet at the throat’ is the acme of smartness; this notion is so widespread as almost to constitute a uniform. Nearly all the women we saw, too, were obviously in constant discomfort, since all were stout and unathletic, all very bonily stayed, and all squeezed into clothes too small for them. Even the schoolgirls moved with a whalebone rigidity; we never saw a woman stepping lithely along. The men, on the other hand, are exceedingly impressive, both to look at and to listen to. Juliet and I were continually dazzled by the pink-and-golden splendour of the Dutch male. Surely a Colonial Dutchman has nothing left to hope for in paradise; he is supreme in his world; everyone in sight is his slave, and, for this reason perhaps, he is conspicuously civilised. Shyness and disappointment cannot enter in to corrupt him; knowing nothing of self-doubt, he dares to be well-informed, hopeful, creative, cosmopolitan; he dares to give intelligent attention to the possibility of change. It seems to me that one sees in the Dutch (and perhaps in representatives of other ‘secondary’ powers) a people who have *time* to be pro-

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gressive. They have time to fit themselves for to-morrow, because they are not so deeply committed to to-day, or so fatally intangled in yesterday. And sceptical though we harassed Great Ones of the Earth may be, there really *is* such a thing as to-morrow. It doesn't matter so *very* much what the Dutch think about, so they think about civilisation. Java is really, I think, an exotic piece of Europe, lived in by civilised Europeans. The English and French colonies that I know are simply colonies, far-away colonies, lived in by faraway exiles. After marvelling for some weeks over the physical and spiritual security and initiative of Dutchmen in Java, I suddenly remembered one very important reason for their superiority. The Dutch can show a generation 'in the prime of life'; the equivalent of this generation in England and France is dead. Well . . . that is one more reason, perhaps, for suggesting that it *pays* to be a Lesser Power. Lesser Powers, enjoying international unimportance (comparatively speaking) possess not only the leisure to be civilised, but unmenaced human lives to dedicate to civilisation.

Juliet and I got up very early next day and drove to the flying field, in order to fly to Batavia. Just as the sun rose our aeroplane roared with the most perfect precision to a spot opposite the tips of our toes. Two very solid Dutch schoolgirls, rashly venturing near the tail of the machine, were incredibly blown away, spinning and shrieking, across the plain. There

were eight comfortable seats inside the aeroplane, and everyone, except Juliet and me, having mounted, nonchalantly opened papers or went to sleep. Juliet and I, however, being barbarous representatives of the race that had spent its youth in governess-carts, sat, twittering softly, hand in hand. The machine, roaring furiously, began skipping along the ground; I realised from the first that we were doomed, for it was quite clearly impossible that we should rise in time to clear several large banyan trees towards which we were rushing at a speed of several thousand miles an hour. However, we *did* clear them; we were temporarily undoomed. Yet I continued to look out, morbidly, for further dooms. I think I shall always be a coward in the air; it is partly because the unkind young pilot, on my only other flight (fifteen years ago in San Francisco), put himself to such great inconvenience to frighten me with loopings of loops and what not, and partly that, since I dream invariably of violence, I have a very catholic experience of the feeling of final emergency - if an illusory one. On to-day's flight I never for a second relaxed; every change of angle made my heart stand still. It is not the fear of death, I really think, so much as the fear of finding myself upside down. However, though my taut body resigned itself to the certainty of doom, my eyes enjoyed themselves very much. Flying seemed a very *slow* way of travelling. The parsley jungle, the cushion fields, the ribbon rivers below us stood almost still. There were no

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people in the world I saw; it was a bright green, innocent little world – just a trifle rough, perhaps, with tiny mountains, but a garden roller could soon put that right. We soared up, through one of the atmospheric rings of Saturn probably, and lost sight of our world. There was now nothing but a white mattress below us – slightly pinkish in the early sun. The wind had pulled up tweaks of down from the mattress. White cloud-obelisks, cloud-domes, cloud-towers, grew up below us and caught the sun abruptly. The feeling of false security that this soft mass close below gave me was the same as that I once felt looking down from a hotel window in New York at a terrace with two pigeons walking upon it; or again, walking on thin ice across a Manchurian river. One pretended, consciously, that this was the solid ground; one collected evidence of security, knowing it to be false, and then – plonk – one's foot went through the ice, or – plonk – one's eye slid over the edge of the New York terrace to the street twenty storeys below, or – plonk – to-day one's eye fell through a little hole in the cloud to the bottom of an

incredibly deep ravine, or found itself impaled on a needle of stone appallingly far below. We came down through the cloud again gradually, flying for a few minutes in a disturbing woolly blindness – and then our engine stopped. We were doomed again. I shut my eyes, and opened them again to find that we were sloping down to Batavia's flying field; we touched the ground without even a hiccup, and drew up with miraculous Dutch precision, punctual to the second, at the doorstep of the aviation office.

Driving through Batavia, it occurred to me that the Dutch language is, from the English point of view, a fatally facetious one. To label a hotel *BAD HOTEL*, for instance . . . is surely *asking* for something. *Haarknippen* seems certainly more roguish than hair-cut; to eat a *snoep* is not really more hilarious than to take a snack, and yet, for a moment, it seems so to the unwary English traveller. And from the Gideon Bible in my hotel room I take this noble phrase: 'Twist, Heere, met mijne Twisters, strijd met mijne Bestrijders.' It is the opening sentence of the thirty-fifth psalm.

Metamorphosis

by Siegfried Sassoon

SANDYS sat translating Ovid. Both his hands
Were busy. Busy was his curious mind.
Each note he wrote was news from fabled lands.
He hob-nobbed with Pythagoras, calm and kind.
In a quaint narrow age, remote from this,
Sat Sandys, translating '*Metamorphosis*'.

The scholarship is obsolete, and the verse
Pedestrian perhaps. Yet, while I turn
His friendly folio pages (none the worse
For emblematic worm-holes) I discern
Not Nature preying on itself, but Time
Revealed by rich humanity in rhyme.

The Problem of Life

by Dorothy Edwards

MR. ROSE had walked from the station, and he stopped a moment in the long narrow path that led up to the house, which was set far back from the road, to get cool. He was fanning himself rather vigorously with his hat when he observed, in some surprise, that a few yards farther on a conversation seemed to be taking place right in the middle of the wide laurel hedge. He walked on, and came upon Mr. James Barron, his host, or rather one leg and one arm of Mr. Barron, for the rest was in the hedge. But in a moment he emerged, brushing the loose leaves off himself and clutching in his hand a book, like a prize that has not been easily come by.

'Is there another Daphne about?' asked Mr. Rose, smiling.

Mr. Barron rushed towards him with an impetuosity that had something sedate in it after all, and ended merely as a vigorous handshake. And at the same time there came from behind the laurels what can only be described as a cascade of feminine laughter.

Mr. Rose smiled interrogatively.

Mr. Barron smiled too, and took his arm to make him turn towards the hedge. 'We did not expect you until

this evening,' he said, and added more loudly: 'If she were really a Daphne, I could at least be sure that she would faithfully inhabit the hedge, whereas perhaps my charming neighbour has already gone away?' And he listened attentively.

'No, I am still here,' she said, 'but I am going at once.'

'Oh, may I not present one of my dearest friends to you, even at the risk of your not recognizing him when you meet face to face?' asked Barron, with an expression that showed that he had forgotten that she could not see him.

'Why, of course,' she said, laughing softly.

'My friend, Mr. Arthur Rose,' said Barron, 'who hides a character of considerable reliability and worth under an exterior that is singularly easy to get on with. Rose, my dear and charming neighbour, Mrs. Chenery, of whose beauty and grace you are prevented from being the already devoted admirer only by a few feet of laurels.'

Mr. Rose bowed ceremoniously to the hedge.

'Madam, if your voice is only yourself made audible, I am already your devoted slave,' he said gracefully.

Mrs. Chenery laughed again. 'I

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have not so many friends that I can afford to leave one unidentified. Mr. Barron, will you bring Mr. Rose to call on me to-morrow morning?’

‘Oh, certainly,’ said Barron smiling at the retreating voice.

They began walking towards the house.

‘Who is she?’ asked Rose.

‘Merely my neighbour, as I said. She lives here with her daughter. She is a most charming and cultivated woman. You will find her very entertaining, witty.’

‘A widow?’ asked Rose, not catching the word.

‘Yes, a widow, too,’ said Barron, ‘but I said witty.’

‘Oh,’ said Rose, and walked on for a minute in silence. Then he reached out for the book Barron was carrying. ‘What is it?’ he asked.

Barron put it in his pocket. ‘Nothing of interest,’ he said, ‘Mrs. Chenery is widely read, but if she has a fault it is that she thinks almost any French novel is of deep literary significance. I must read a chapter or two and then return it. But my dear fellow, let us talk about you. How are you, and how long can you stay?’

‘I am very well, and I can stay until your amiable little stepsister throws me out. That completely exhausts the subject of myself. How is she?’

‘Well,’ said Barron a little absently, ‘and, I think, happier than before. She is very friendly with Mrs. Chenery and her daughter. Besides, now Adrian is home for a vacation. And you know, I think you exaggerate her hostility

to yourself. It is simply that she has a difficult nature, a very difficult nature,’ and he sighed.

Rose whistled to himself dubiously.

Mr. Barron’s father had died when he was a little boy, but he was already a youth when his mother married again, a young, morose and exceedingly good-looking Jew. Barron had felt from the start relieved of all obligation to like his stepfather, and there had emerged what for some reason he felt to be a natural distaste for his race, instead of what might well have been a jealousy of his person. For Barron, with his thick well-brushed hair, his fine complexion, his neat and compact figure, and the unobtrusive elegance of his clothes, could never by any possible means have looked either dashingly handsome or romantically passionate. And if one stopped to notice it, there was in the comparison of himself with his young stepfather, something a trifle comic. His mother died when the two children of her second husband were still children. When this happened Barron was at the University. Their father took charge of them, and for many years Barron did not find it necessary to see them. Then, a year ago, he died, and Barron found himself made the guardian of the orphans, a compliment that threatened to throw his bachelor existence into an alarming turmoil, which his friends regarded with amusement or compassion, according to their temperaments.

Barron and Rose walked up towards the house. Rachel Bernstein was standing on the steps. She had on

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a dark dress, and her neck, and a part of her shoulder where the dress had slipped sideways, looked extraordinarily white in the sunlight. She had short black curls, which framed her pale face; but her head, bent forward, accentuated a certain sharp look on her face.

She did, indeed, greet Rose with an expression that could not have been called friendly. He smiled at her a shade provocatively, and she shook hands with him indifferently without speaking.

Barron was saying excitably, 'I have been looking forward so much to your coming. Let us go in and begin to talk about everything at once.'

'I had better show Mr. Rose his room first,' said Rachel. She had been leaning up against a large empty stone vase by the side of the steps. She had very pretty feet, elegantly shod. Rose looked down at them with a smile, as if he were secretly amused. And Barron, frowning a little at this lack of cordiality, took his arm and led him into the house.

Rachel turned round and said to Rose, 'Where is your luggage, Mr. Rose?'

'At the station. I told them to send it.'

'They won't send it till to-morrow,' she said, shrugging her shoulders slightly. 'We must send someone to fetch it. Please come.'

She began to walk upstairs. Rose looked round at Barron with a comic gesture of resignation, and he said in a low voice, 'I am her favourite, you

know.' Then he followed Rachel.

But when he had caught up with her, and Barron had gone into a room, instead of making some teasing remark, or maintaining an amused and provocative silence, he put his hand quite tenderly on her shoulder and said, 'Well, what is worrying you now?'

'Nothing,' she answered. She began opening the door of a room, looking down at the knob.

'Well, well,' he said meditatively, taking his clean white handkerchief out of his pocket and wiping his face with it. They went in and he at once threw his hat down on the bed and sat there himself. She stood by the window.

'How many miles is it from the station?' he asked.

'About four.'

'Ah, well, I'm tired all the same. It seemed like a hundred.' He sat on the bed looking at her. He had grown rather fat lately, and on a day like this he felt faintly helpless. She was standing at the side of the window looking down intently into the garden.

'How is Adrian?' he asked.

She looked up quickly. 'He is here,' she said, 'but he has gone for a long walk to-day. He seems to be getting on well. He works very hard. James is himself surprised at his cleverness.'

'A young genius!' said Rose, smiling.

She shrugged her shoulders with impatience and her quick anger.

'Perhaps he is,' she said. 'There is no reason why he shouldn't be.'

'Oh, look at me!' said Rose with a

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self-confident smile, 'people thought I was a genius at eighteen. Now we have abandoned our illusions.'

'He was nineteen last week,' said Rachel quite seriously.

There was a silence. Rose looked round the room. Then his eyes went back to her by the window.

'And what about you?' he asked.

She did not answer.

'Are you quite happy here?'

She looked across at him. He was looking so serious that she suddenly began to laugh, but not with complete gaiety, rather a little contemptuously. 'Oh, yes,' she said. 'Come and look out of this window. This is really the nicest room in the house.'

He walked slowly to look. Beyond the garden, which at that side was only a narrow strip of lawn hedged with laurels, a field sloped down away from the house, and then, from a hedge with one or two tall chestnut trees in it, another field sloped more steeply upwards, and at the top, but over the laurel hedge which still followed it, one could see the roof of what must have been a little summer house.

'What is that?' asked Rose pointing to it.

'It belongs to our neighbours. That is the end of their garden.'

'Is that Mrs. Chenery?' he asked.

'Yes. Do you know her?' she asked sharply.

'Only through the hedge. I haven't seen her.'

'Through the hedge,' she repeated, and began to laugh. 'Did James introduce you?'

'Yes,' he said, 'a very romantic incident.'

Rachel began walking out of the room. Rose looked at her pretty feet. She did not turn back but walked along the corridor and downstairs.

'Little idiot,' said Rose under his breath, and he lay back in his chair, putting his feet on another one; he must have gone to sleep there.

After dinner, when Rachel had gone out of the room, Barron and Rose stayed there talking. Rose sat smiling a little to himself over some story he was going to tell; he was engaged in cracking nuts. He had cracked so many already that his plate was piled up with the shells, and he put each new one precariously on the top of the pile. Barron, sitting a little in the shadow, leaned forward to listen. He loved to hear about his friend's experiences at the courts, for Rose was a barrister, while Barron lived an idle and sometimes a very dull life here in the country, though he had been engaged for some time in writing a book on Mino da Fiesole, a companion to one he had published many years ago on the Siennese painters. So he encouraged Rose to tell his stories, and Rose, with a deprecating and knowing air told some very good ones, though he for his part would have been very glad to change his life for what he conceived to be the gentle and unruffled happiness of life here.

Barron filled their glasses and under some impulse of gratitude to those gods who encourage the friendships of men, he held up his glass and

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without speaking looked through the red wine to the window, his soft, rather small hand, clutching the glass firmly. One or two stars had already appeared in the sky, which was still a greyish-blue in the soft evening light. The French window was open and the faint perfumes of the garden entered the room and refreshed them.

Barron sighed a little to himself from a momentary sentimental feeling, not from unhappiness.

'To-morrow,' he said, beginning to smile, 'I must take you to see Mrs. Chenery in the morning.'

'What does she look like?' asked Rose. 'That hedge was very thick.'

'Oh, ravishing,' said Barron. 'She has the most exquisite cold blue eyes and a beautiful head. But her voice is the most beautiful thing about her.'

'Have you read your French novel?' asked Rose, beginning to smile.

'Good heavens! No!' said Barron in some alarm.

'Didn't you say she had a daughter?' asked Rose. 'What is she like?'

'Oh, very young – about seventeen,' said Barron, giving the matter serious attention, but finding no other answer.

And Rose, not very much interested by this, pushed his plate of nutshells away from him and leaned back in his chair with his head bent down a little, and for a long time they were silent, Barron watching the stars come out and the sky grow slowly darker.

On the lawn the tall slim figure of

a boy appeared; he came right up to the window and entered the room. It was Adrian. He stood not saying a word, waiting for them to speak to him. He had his sister's very white skin and her black hair, but his eyes were not small and bright like hers but large and dark and curiously soft, like those of an animal or of a very beautiful woman. There was something strange in his attitude as he stood waiting for them to question him, something that was rather child-like and yet without a child's impetuosity.

'Oh, you've come back?' said Barron. 'You remember Mr. Rose, don't you?'

Adrian smiled and came up to shake hands with Rose; Rose did not say anything to him but sat a little heavily in his chair contemplating him with curiosity.

'Have you had dinner?' asked Barron.

'Yes, before I started back,' he answered. He stood as if waiting to be dismissed.

'How is Leslie?' asked Barron rather coldly.

'He's working quite hard,' said Adrian, smiling a little. 'He has to take German next year and he is jolly well going to know it.'

Barron nodded his head approvingly. 'You ought to do German,' he said.

'I haven't time this year,' said Adrian. Then he smiled again, and with a certain amount of hesitation went from the room.

'His sister tells me he is a genius,'

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said Rose; 'or rather I divine that she seemed to think so.'

'Does she?' said Barron rather amused. He got up and began to move to the door. In the other room they found Adrian sitting reading by the fire. He looked up from his book as they came in. Rose examined him again with interest, and he was preparing to sit down near him when Barron, with an air of exhorting his soldiers to battle, suggested that they should go for a walk. Rose got up. Rachel came into the room at that moment.

'Get a wrap,' said Rose to her.

She looked at him without replying and, seeing Adrian still sitting there with his book, she went out again and returned with a black woollen shawl on her shoulders.

'You won't come?' said Barron, turning to look down at Adrian.

'I have been out nearly all day. I would like to read now,' Adrian answered, looking up at him as if he expected the permission to be withheld.

Barron turned away.

They went out through the garden and to the path alongside the hedge which Rose could see from his window, where some chestnut trees stood, now letting the moonlight find its way through their spread leaves. Barron walked a little in front and Rose followed with Rachel. The back of her neck showed very white above her black shawl and her hair shone almost like polished wood.

'Well, my child,' said Rose, 'you have a lot to make you happy.'

'How?' she asked, always a trifle impatiently, for she found his provocative and teasing attention annoying, though it seemed to have its origin in an emotion wholly friendly.

'Well, you really have got a nice brother.'

'You've seen him before,' she said.

'Yes, but I didn't detect his halo before,' he said, laughing maliciously.

She shrugged her shoulders and hurried on a few steps. Rose put out his hand and took hold of the end of her shawl to restrain her until he caught up with her.

'Well, my dear girl, I don't think you can afford to live entirely on your brother's future laurels. What are you going to do with yourself?'

'Nothing,' she said quite angrily.

'All right, all right,' he said, 'you ought to be grateful for my advice.'

Barron turned and smiled at them anxiously. He had caught something of the last words, and he was evidently afraid they were going to quarrel.

When they reached the road all three walked together. Barron held out his arm to Rachel and Rose was surprised to see her take it quite graciously and walk on by his side. The moonlight shone on them and on the road. It was nearly as light as day, only the sky had the curious grey-blue of summer twilight and the stars sparkled out from it.

Barron, with Rachel on his arm and Rose beside him, looked up at the stars and experienced a moment of joy. This indefinite grey-blue night, gemmed with sparkling stars, like

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diamonds upon a ghost, seemed for a moment to belong only to him. He looked at Rose and Rachel, and he had the impulse to try and share this happiness with them, but he found no words in which to say it, and he began instead to think how he would try and put in some work on Mino da Fiesole pretty soon.

They turned now on to the road and walked along it until they reached the gate which led to the front of the house, and as they came along the narrow path with the laurels, a little cloud hid the moon for an instant and in the sudden darkness, and in a voice heavy with mock solemnity, Rose whispered:

‘Here is the magic spot where I heard the siren’s voice.’

Barron laughed and put his hand affectionately on his arm

When they reached the house they found Adrian still reading, and his large beautiful eyes looked up reluctantly from the page.

The next morning Rose woke up refreshed and full of life. The sun shone so brightly that everything, the trees and the grass and the sky itself, seemed blurred and softened by the warmth. During the morning the two men went to call on Mrs. Chenery. Before her house there was a lawn overshadowed and darkened by a few tall fir trees that grew together at one side. Here they found her. She was lying in a chair reading, but at once, when she saw them at the gate, she got up and came across the lawn towards them. She wore a white dress,

and was tall. Her pretty palest gold hair had darker glints in it that were now accentuated by the shadows of the tall trees. And the cold blue eyes, of which Barron had spoken so enthusiastically, smiled a welcome. She stretched out her hand to Barron, and the hand, too, was really very beautiful. Barron pressed it rather obviously. She smiled at him, and then, still resting her hand lightly in his, she turned her head to Rose and asked in the sweet voice that had come over the hedge, ‘Is this my new friend?’

Rose smiled at her, and said, ‘Your already devoted slave become visible.’

She laughed and led the way to the edge of the lawn, where she had been sitting. They sat down, and she began to talk. Rose looked about him and listened to her voice, and smiled at her when she looked at him, to show that he was listening, but he did not, like Barron, listen to every word she said. It was perhaps not profound enough. He found himself wondering if the daughter would appear, and surprised in himself now a certain curiosity about her. So he left Barron in entire mastery of the conversation, while Mrs. Chenery, though she gave Rose many opportunities of answering her remarks, and even displayed a little of the wit he had heard about, seemed quite contented to confine her attention to Barron, who sat very near her chair and even then leaned a little forward, as if excitably anxious not to lose a single vibration of her voice, or, perhaps, a single ripple of the sunlight on her head.

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Again Rose, looking around lazily, wondered if the daughter would not soon appear between the trees or from the house. Mrs. Chenery, he reflected, could not have a very grown-up daughter. She could not herself be nearly forty. He looked at her and she smiled. He wondered if she knew that he was trying to calculate her age.

After a time Barron succeeded in tearing himself from her, and they went home without the daughter having made her appearance.

But in the afternoon Rose made her acquaintance by chance. He went for a little stroll after lunch, and as he was returning by the path near the chestnut trees he saw three women coming towards him across the field which sloped from behind Mrs. Chenery's house. Mrs. Chenery herself called out to him. He stopped and waited for them to reach the path, contemplating them lazily. Mrs. Chenery wore a large straw hat, and her blue eyes smiled from under it as she held out her hand towards him. With her was Rachel, looking intently and suspiciously at him; why he could not tell, and she had her arm round the waist of another girl, who stood looking at the grass. She was about seventeen. Her pale fair hair was just tied behind, and it was brushed neatly away from an exceedingly beautiful forehead, of a certain almost transparent paleness.

'This is my daughter Emilia,' said Mrs. Chenery; as I suppose she would have said, pointing to the flowers in her garden, 'These are violets' or 'these are lilies.'

The girl raised large serious grey eyes, very dark and very gentle, to Rose, and smiled slightly. She made a tiny movement towards Rachel, and then looked down again at the grass.

'And are you three angels taking an afternoon off from Paradise, or are you come on some purely mundane business?' asked Rose.

'You can remain in a pleasant doubt about it,' said Mrs. Chenery, smiling. 'We three are going for a picnic by ourselves.'

'Oh,' said Rose, appearing to meditate. Then he looked at Rachel and laughed because he felt that she, too, should be amused at his including her among the angels. But she scowled at him, still keeping her arm close around Emilia's waist. He smiled at her with mock helplessness, and dropped his eyes for a moment to her feet, hidden in the grass. But Mrs. Chenery had already said good-bye and they went on, leaving him standing in the path under the trees. He kept his hat in his hand and fanned himself with it as he strolled slowly along the path.

In the garden in front of the house was a large rhododendron bush and beside it a wooden table and a seat. Here sat Adrian. He was reading *Catullus*. Rose was on the point of going up to speak to him, and his hesitating movement caught Adrian's attention. The boy kept his hand resting on his book and waited for Rose to come near. But he thought better of it, and went away, and Adrian went on with his reading, and stayed there until the end of the long afternoon.

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It was late before the sun set, away behind the house. The eastern sky was filled with a pale golden glow, and above it the stars began to appear, half sunken in the soft palest blue sky. The leaves of the laurels caught the reflection of the pale gold and, as it grew darker, the flowers of the rhododendron deepened, until what had been a clear pink in the daytime seemed about to burst into little flames. But almost before they had leaped into life they were extinguished and only the stars and the moon cast a gentle silver light on everything.

Mr. Rose, standing at his window looking at the silent fields and the motionless trees, suddenly saw a little figure dart up the slope. It was Rachel running, her black shawl dragging behind her in the grass. She reached the gate of Mrs. Chenery's garden near the summer house and disappeared. Rose stood watching, as it grew darker. In about half an hour she came again into sight, running sometimes down the slope, then stopping and walking slowly as if she thought of something that had just been said and was turning it over in her mind. As she came up to the house Rose went close to the window to see her cross the garden just beneath, because he was always a little given to curiosity about other people.

'I wonder what she's been up to?' he said to himself. Then he put his light on and began to read.

The next evening they were all to dine at Mrs. Chenery's. Rose always took a long time to dress. Adrian came to his door and said in his rather soft,

sober voice, 'Mr. Rose, James says you must follow us. We were waiting for you, but we shall be late.'

'Yes go, go along,' said Rose, hurrying as much as he could.

But he saw them all walk together up the field while he was still in his room, and they had reached Mrs. Chenery's garden before he set out to follow. He had not gone there that way before. When he reached the little gate between the laurels he paused a moment, because he had been hurrying. He looked with interest at the little wooden summer house, so small that if it were raining, and one sat on the seat in it, one would scarcely be sheltered.

'She comes here to exchange confidences with that girl,' he thought to himself.

He bent down to open the gate and walked slowly in. Built on to the back of the house was a glasshouse not used to grow plants in, for there was a table in it and a clothes-line stretched across inside it. At the door stood a maid. She was a dark thick-set girl, and she stood leaning against the lintel, one hand resting on her neck. Her rather coarse black hair was coming undone, and she was looking dreamily at the sky between the trees.

'Good evening,' said Rose, smiling very graciously.

The girl started slightly, and said 'Good evening, sir.'

'A nice evening,' he said, coming nearer to the door.

'Yes sir,' she said, smiling suspiciously.

Rose stood smiling at her, but

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after a minute he remembered that he had to hurry. He let his hand pass lightly and with a casual air over the front of her dress. She blushed and began to giggle, but he had already walked away. 'That,' he said to himself, 'is the sort of girl I like,' and he made a gesture with his hand that indicated to himself that she was not too thin. As he turned the corner of the house he stopped to wave amiably to her.

Mrs. Chenery gave his hand a little friendly pressure. Barron was laughing. He surmised that they had been talking before he came in of the vanity which made him take so long to dress. Almost immediately they went in to dinner. Emilia and Adrian sat together at the bottom of the table, their backs to the French window through which showed the slightly paling sky. Adrian sat in silence, alert and eager in his sober way, and yet not wholly listening to what was said, nor examining the others with any very eager interest. Emilia raised her grey eyes and spoke to Rose, who sat next to her.

'Have you been here before?' she asked.

'In this place?' said Rose. 'Yes, I came here to stay with Barron last year. You were not here then?'

'No,' she said, speaking slowly, 'we have been here only six months. I love it. I think this house is so beautiful and the garden is lovely.'

'Yes,' said Rose, smiling; 'I wonder what her father was like?' he

thought. 'She isn't a bit like her mother.'

A thin silver chain around her neck caught his attention. It hung down under her dress attached to something.

'A wedding ring or a key to a locked room,' he thought to amuse himself.

Mrs. Chenery and Barron were whispering together, but when she saw that Rose was looking at them she looked down the table and said in her low pretty voice, 'We were not talking secrets you know.'

'What *were* you talking about?' asked Rose.

'Why, I don't know,' she said in surprise, as if she had really forgotten. But then she began to chat to Rose about the books and the plays and the people they were both acquainted with.

The two children at the bottom of the table, unable to enter into this, sat in silence, a little shut out from the company, and Rachel too listened in silence, but a little contemptuously.

Adrian was very conscious of this feeling of being shut out, but it was something he sometimes experienced. It came inexplicably and went again; it brought with it a kind of melancholy somewhere deep down in his soul, too far down for him to find it and cast it away. And he felt this now.

After dinner the others sat talking and laughing together in the drawing-room. Mrs. Chenery went to the piano and sang. Since nobody seemed to require his attention he slipped quietly

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out into the garden and walked across the lawn into the shadow of the trees. Her voice from there in the darkness added to the enchantment of the evening. And above, the stars shone like jewels in the soft pale sky. After a moment he walked away farther into the garden and stood in the full moonlight. There were two laurel bushes there in the open space and he stood between them so still that one might have taken him for an apparition, or for some being from another world who had taken advantage of the silence of the garden to come and meditate there. Emilia, coming softly across the lawn to him, nearly did take him for one, and stood for a second behind him, feeling almost apprehensive as she whispered 'Adrian, is it you?'

He looked round, very much surprised at her being there.

'Yes,' he said unnecessarily, gazing down at her with serious eyes

'Rachel missed you from the house and set out to look for you. She went to the back of the house and I came here. She thought there was something wrong.'

He looked at her in silence again for a moment. He wondered how to find words to explain to her. 'I thought it was nice out here,' he said, hoping that this conveyed what he had been feeling.

She looked at the laurel bushes whose leaves were turned by the moonlight into the palest silver; and at the moon above the tall fir trees and at the soft pale blue starry sky, and then she turned to him again. She thought how

nice it was that when they were all talking and laughing gaily, he should have thought of the beauty of the night in the garden. She smiled, looking at him seriously at the same time to see if he understood that she was trying to express her comprehension. He smiled too, but he began to contemplate the garden again as if it had not occurred to him to go back to the house with her, and as if he were preparing to lose himself in another dream. She stood silently and a little shyly, not wishing to ask him to move from there, but feeling at the same time a sad, lonely feeling, because the trees and the stars were not giving her quite the same absorbing pleasure.

'Summer is much nicer than the other seasons,' he said suddenly.

'It is nice,' she said, a little in doubt at this extravagance, 'but I think we really like them to change. We wouldn't like it all the year.'

'No,' he said with his old docility. He stood there quietly, not seeming to know what to do next.

'Let us go back,' Emilia said, turning.

As they hurried across the lawn he said, 'I somehow felt sad.'

'Yes,' she said, casting a little glance at him. Then she stopped suddenly. 'I looked at you once at dinner and I thought then that you felt sad inside,' she said with an air of being herself surprised at the truth of her discovery.

Adrian was so much astonished at this that he did not answer but began to think, letting Emilia lead him where

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she wanted to. And before they reached the window she said, looking anxiously along the path, 'Perhaps Rachel is still looking for you. We had better find her first so that we don't have to go in and then out again.'

She hurried forward. They went round to the back of the house. Adrian hardly seemed to realise that they were looking for someone. He was trying to express something that was in his mind, but it was quite inarticulate, and he began to give up the idea of attempting it. Emilia looked at the summer house, though it seemed hardly likely that Rachel would have been sitting there waiting for them to turn up.

'She isn't here,' said Emilia, 'let's go back.'

When they got back to the kitchen door, the same maid that Rose had spoken to had come out again and stood there looking at the dark trees.

'Oh, Rhoda,' said Emilia, 'have you seen Rachel? She was looking for us.'

'She's in the drawing-room now,' said Rhoda. 'I've just been in there. She's sitting on the sofa by herself.'

'Oh, thank you,' said Emilia, 'let's hurry.'

'Why does she stand there?' asked Adrian when they were out of earshot.

'I don't know. She is engaged now, perhaps she is waiting for her young man,' said Emilia.

Adrian seemed now to have completely lost his pre-occupation. Only as they went round to the front, he said, 'Have you read any Shelley?'

'Only at school,' she answered,

'*The Ode to the West Wind*. Is he nice?'

'Oh yes,' he said, 'I am very fond of him. If you haven't a copy I'll lend you mine and you can read him again, if you would like to.'

'Oh, thank you very much,' she said, though she wondered if she would like reading poetry as much as he did.

They met Rachel coming out of the house again. She looked anxiously up at him. He smiled gaily. 'I just went for a walk in the garden,' he said. But Rachel still looked at him a trifle suspiciously and Emilia, seeing this, contemplated his face thoughtfully, thinking that perhaps there was some secret there that she had not fathomed. Then they went quietly into the room. Mrs. Chenery was standing by the piano, looking down with a smile at Mr. Rose who sat before it protesting that he could on no account play the piece which had been set before him, and making himself very entertaining and amusing. Mr. Barron went across the room to take part in the dispute. He stood by Mrs. Chenery, his eyes stealing little glances at her even in the middle of the repartee. But Mrs. Chenery, turning her charming head and suddenly observing her daughter, said, 'Then I shall ask Emilia to play it. You will be surprised at how well she plays.' Mr. Rose leapt from the piano stool to make way for her, and Emilia, a little shyly, but with no thought of refusing, came to the piano and began to play a little piece of Scriabin. Rachel had seated herself on the sofa beside her brother, and now as he

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listened to the music, she looked at him and even moved her hand to rest on his arm. She felt happy.

The next morning Adrian took his Shelley from the bookcase in his bedroom and went to Emilia's house, hurrying along the path as if he were in a great hurry. But when he came to the garden he found Mrs. Chenery sitting there and she must have thought he had come to see her, or she never gave the matter a thought at all, for she made him sit there beside her. She sent for lemonade for him to drink and she talked to him, rather kindly and patronizingly. Once or twice she yawned rather prettily, and leaning back in her chair she shaded her eyes from the sunlight with her hand, and looking up at him with interest thought what a very handsome boy he was.

But when Emilia came out of the house and stopped in surprise at seeing him, he stood up and said, 'I came really to bring this book for Emilia.'

Mrs. Chenery smiled up at him, still shading her blue eyes with her hand. 'What is it?' she asked.

'Shelley,' he said, bending down to hold the book where she could see it.

'Shelley,' she repeated in her beautiful low voice, and she lay back again in her chair, taking no further interest in them. As they walked away together, she yawned again, smoothed a little curl of her hair away from her forehead, and began lazily to grope with her hand on the grass for the book she had dropped when Adrian had come hurrying across the lawn.

Emilia did not say a word but held out her hand for the book and looked at him, wondering why he had brought it so soon, and if there were anything that made it urgently necessary to read it at once.

'I will tell you which ones I would like you to read first,' he said, and looking over the book together they began walking along the path. And when they got to the little gate by the summer house, she would have stopped, but he suggested that they should walk down the field and along the path near the chestnut trees.

She lifted her eyes to his. 'Adrian, I thought you were going to be a great scientist. I didn't think you would be so fond of poetry.'

'Oh, but I like poetry very much,' he said seriously. 'And you know I think really great scientists and poets have very much in common. Besides there is something different in Shelley, exactly as though he were a scientist really. I don't know though, perhaps I like him because I have the same kind of temperament.' He looked thoughtfully across the field. Then he turned to say very seriously to her, 'I don't mean to be conceited when I say that.'

Her grave grey eyes looked at him, trying to express their comprehension. 'No, of course,' she said, 'I should never think that.'

They walked on in silence again; but when they were near the first of the chestnut trees he stopped suddenly and said, 'Do you never feel sad?'

'Yes, sometimes,' she answered. 'Mother says it is depression, but I

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don't think it is; it is something vague. Of course, I never get real fits of melancholy.'

'Do you know,' he said, 'I think it was awfully nice of you to notice yesterday that I felt sad.'

She looked up at him again with her serious grey eyes, and was about to say something, but she left it unsaid, and looked on the ground. Adrian contemplated the beautiful curve of her forehead and her half-shut eyes. Then he looked up the field to the hedge of the garden where a rhododendron was flowering.

'Would you like one of those flowers?' he asked. 'I think they are awfully beautiful. I don't know why people don't use them in vases. Will you have one?'

She nodded, smiling in surprise, and he ran up the slope and stretched up and picked one of the big flowers. He came back and gave it to her, and she went back, carrying the flower and the book.

'You can keep the Shelley as long as you like,' he said.

'Thank you very much,' she said. He watched her for a minute, and then turned and went home.

The next afternoon Mrs. Chenery set out to pay a visit to her neighbours, and she took Emilia with her. As they crossed the fields she talked to her daughter. 'Milia, do you know that when you wear that grey dress you ought always to wear pearls with it? That gives just the right effect.'

'Yes, mother. I meant to, but I forgot to put them on.'

'You should not forget details,' said her mother, looking at her own pretty shoes, half hidden in the nodding grass.

'No, I know,' said Emilia, 'but I somehow forget.' She looked admiringly at her mother, at her head beneath the little parasol, at the scarf which fell over one shoulder nearly to the edge of her flowered dress.

'You look awfully nice to-day,' she said.

'Thank you, dear,' said her mother, raising her parasol a little to look at the pale blue sky with its little white clouds tinged with gold in the glow of the sun.

'That boy Adrian,' said she, 'is a very nice youth. Do you think he is as clever as they think he is?'

'Oh yes,' said Emilia, wondering that it should be questioned.

'You sound quite awestruck,' said Mrs. Chenery, laughing. She drew her scarf around her so that it should not catch in the hedge as they entered the garden.

Barron was sitting on the seat beside the large rhododendron, and he hurried forward with both hands outstretched to meet Mrs. Chenery and her daughter. Mr. Rose and Rachel had at that moment reached the lawn, and he was smiling and talking to her while she stared a little angrily at the ground. Emilia went over to her, and leaving Rose they walked about together talking, while Rose went up to the others. But when the tea was brought out Rachel went to the table and Emilia, as the others laughed and talked together, had a momentary feeling of the

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vague sadness she has described. It went almost at once, and she stood watching her mother and listening to her little ripples of laughter.

But suddenly there was a whisper behind her. 'Emilia, Emilia.' She looked round almost apprehensively. It was Adrian, half hiding behind a bush. With his fingers to his lips he beckoned to her to come. She looked to see if the others had seen him, but they were absorbed in their own conversation, and Rachel was talking to the maid. So, very quietly, she slipped to the other side of the bush, wondering at the need for secrecy. Adrian began to laugh softly.

'They are going to have tea outside,' he whispered, 'and I hate it, so let's slip away.'

She smiled, rather childishly overawed by his wickedness. He led the way across the path, tip-toeing and keeping the bush between them and the others. He turned round again and laughed, and took hold of her sleeve to hurry her along. They crept under the low branches of some trees on the other side of the path.

'We can get through the hedge lower down,' he said, bending down to pass under a branch and stopping to hold it for her to follow. In a short time her grey dress could scarcely be distinguished between the green leaves.

Beside the rhododendron Mrs. Chenery poured out tea for Mr. Barron, and he drank it as though it were nectar

from the very flowers that glowed behind her chair and brushed against her charming head.

'Where is Adrian?' asked she.

'I don't know,' said Rachel, 'but he never comes out to tea in the garden. He doesn't like it.'

Mr. Rose happened to notice that Emilia was missing, too. He did not remark upon it, but he thought to himself almost sadly that he could not follow them across the fields and through the woods.

'Youth,' he thought, 'youth. What a damned fine thing it is!' He looked for a moment at the grass at his feet. Then, turning to the others, and seeing the rhododendron and the laurels all glistening in the sun, and at the little group of people and at Rachel, staring sulkily at her cup and saucer, he said aloud, 'What a delightful place this is! What should you say, dearest and most beautiful lady, if this moment were the end of the world?'

Mrs. Chenery smiled. 'I should say "Let me pour you out another cup of tea quickly before it comes."'

Mr. Barron held out his cup beseechingly.

'Tea,' said Rose, 'seems a weak beverage for such an occasion,' and as he handed his cup over he made such an extraordinarily amusing grimace that they all began to laugh; even Rachel smiled at him as though she had just noticed Emilia's absence and was jealously wondering if she and Adrian had gone off together without her.

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by Wilfrid Ward

arranged by his daughter, Maisie Ward

(*Wilfrid Ward did not keep a diary of each day's events, but he made frequent notes of any meetings or conversations which had specially interested him. Some of these I have gathered here.*)

I WROTE for the *Spectator* a little and steadily collected material for my father's Life. I associated with very interesting people.

I became intimate with my father's old friend, Baron von Hügel, certainly one of the most remarkable men I ever saw. I visited Cardinal Newman. I saw much of the Tennysons and Hutton and a good deal of Dean Church and Dr. Liddon and Aubrey de Vere, more still of Lord Emly.

I hope and think I learnt much from them all. But I still needed the presence of a more inspiring object, or of necessity, to make me overcome the idle habits of my youth. Work was desultory and intermittent, though I read a good deal. I put my best efforts into my father's Life and determined to make his mental history an occasion for a study of various currents of religious thought. I knew that a biography was likely to pay its way, so I could do this without the drawback of directly philo-

sophical writing – to which Hutton and von Hügel both urged me strongly – which was that I simply could not afford to publish it. I had not got what von Hügel had in abundance, that intense passion for learning and thought which would have enabled me to construct a *magnum opus* with no thought of its immediate sale.

MEETING WITH MR. GLADSTONE AT THE HOUSE OF MRS. AGAR ELLIS (LATER LADY CLEVEDEN)

The company consisted of Mr. Gladstone, Lady Londonderry, the Bishop of Salford, afterwards Cardinal Vaughan, Richard Hutton of the *Spectator*, myself and Lord Hartington, afterwards Duke of Devonshire. I sat next to Mr. Gladstone, who made himself most agreeable, and I remember being struck by his attitude of absolute equality in his conversation with me, young though I was. He talked warmly of my father, whom he had known well as an undergraduate at Christ Church. They were both in the Union set, but they never kept up any friendship in later life. We also had much conversation about the *Wish to Believe*.¹

¹ Wilfrid Ward's first book.

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Lord Hartington had come in very hungry after a long day of committee work and was very obviously dissatisfied with the unsubstantial French dishes which were placed before him, so much so that he would hardly speak at all in reply to his hostess's observations. When a joint of roast beef at last appeared he said in a deep voice, 'Hurrah, something to eat at last,' and from that time onward thawed and was agreeable enough. But so deep an impression had the unsatisfactory nature of the first courses made on him that when I met him eighteen years later at the British Embassy in Rome and reminded him of the place of our former meeting, he at once said, 'Of course, I remember it, we had nothing to eat.'

The other episode which amused me was the conversation between Gladstone and Lord Hartington after dinner. They talked politics. Gladstone said much and Hartington said little, but it seemed to me that while they really argued Hartington's steady straight mind made him much more effective than Mr. Gladstone, brilliant rhetorician that he was. In this part of the conversation the rest of us were for the most part listeners though Hutton took some share in it. Then Gladstone began to talk theology, which was agreeable enough to Hutton and myself, but the other two were bored to a degree which they did not attempt to disguise. Vaughan had no idea of talking theology with a heretic, and to Lord Hartington such conversation was unintelligible and boring. He

ended by moving over to the other side of the table and sitting next to Vaughan, and they kept up an animated conversation on sport and the other interests of country gentlemen, while the rest of us continued our theology. I believe this was the beginning of the acquaintance between Lord Hartington and the Bishop which afterwards developed into a friendship.

JOWETT AND RUSKIN

My intercourse with several of my father's old friends in these years was exceedingly interesting. They were all of them very keen to help me in making his biography life-like and full. Jowett especially took a great interest in my work. He wrote me a long letter for publication in the book, giving his own recollections of my father at Oxford. The genial and humorous side of my father's character was specially congenial to him. This was yet more evident in conversation than in what he wrote, and again and again Jowett would show me the exact spot which was the scene of one of the stories of my father which were current in the Oxford of his youth or which he himself remembered.

I used often to stay with Jowett at the Master's House adjoining Balliol - sometimes for a week-end, when he generally had an interesting gathering of guests, some of them, then or afterwards, prominent public characters. I remember meeting there the present Lord Curzon¹ and Lord Midleton, Sir

¹ This was written in 1913

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Thomas Brassey, Ruskin, Bryce, Lord Lingen, and others who were then or later on well known. Though on the whole a silent host, Jowett's presence was always felt. And his brief remarks given forth in treble staccato tones, often with pauses between his sentences, were always listened to with attention. He had reached the time of life when people are disposed to look back at the past and moralize.

I once walked with him for an hour in the Broad Street after we had been dining with an old friend of my father's. He talked on that occasion much of his past and of his views. I remember two things he said which struck me a good deal. One referred to his opposition to my father's views. 'We pulled opposite ways. Our ideals for Oxford were diametrically opposed.' Then after a pause: 'Your father would not at all approve of Oxford now. We have got all the things I wanted! But' – another pause – 'I must admit that we don't turn out as strong men or as remarkable men now as we did in your father's time.'

One of the most curious developments of his later life was his *engouement* for music, for which he had no ear whatever. Mr. Farmer had come to Balliol from Harrow – full of his somewhat eccentric and very catching enthusiasm. Jowett took him up, and under his inspiration instituted Sunday evening concerts in the Hall at Balliol. I remember playing and singing Schubert's *Erlkönig* at one of the first – if not actually the first of these concerts. But whenever I visited him I sang to his

guests and himself after dinner in his drawing-room. Jowett used to stand behind the piano while I was performing in his drawing-room, humming in a low tone some sounds which resembled a high wind heard through a window. The sounds had no relation whatever to what I was singing. He occasionally used to 'beat time' as he thought, but his movements did not in the least correspond to the rhythm of the music. He particularly liked me to sing songs he remembered my father singing in his Balliol days. On Saturday nights everything was allowed, grave or gay, and on one special Saturday besides *Largo al factotum* from Rossini's *Barbiere* (one of my father's favourite songs) he had greatly enjoyed a song of J. L. Hatton called the 'Little Grey Man,' which introduced some laughs of a very festive character. On Sunday night he wanted some more songs, but when I suggested to repeat one of these two he shook his head at each proposal with considerable solemnity. 'No, no, it is Sunday. We must not be frivolous. We must have something suitable to the day.' After a long pause he said, as a happy thought, 'Sing us *Madamina*,' the well known song in which Don Giovanni gives a list of his *amours*. I thought this very funny, but perhaps he did not realise the drift of the words and took the solemn melody of the second movement to be a psalm. Anyhow, this song was duly sung by me as our Sunday hymn.

I got from Jowett once an interesting correction of a current Oxford anecdote. I was told by an Oxford

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undergraduate that Jowett had been a good deal annoyed at men staying up during the 'long,' and had got rid of them in the end by doubling the prayers and halving the rations. He went, it was said, to the railway station with complacency and watched undergraduates getting into the train, and said to a friend: 'That sort goeth not forth except by prayer and fasting.' I made a bet that I would find out from himself if the story was true. Meeting him at Aldworth I drew him to talk of Dr. Jenkyns, the old Master of Balliol in my father's time, of whom many stories used to be told. I said, 'I heard this story of *one* Master of Balliol,' and proceeded to relate the anecdote, adding 'Was this Jenkyns?' He replied, 'You are quite wrong. It is a true story, but it was long before Jenkyns' time. And it was in the days of stage coaches. There is no railway station in the story at all. It was the Magdalen men who stayed up, and old Dr. Routh got rid of them by making them starve and pray.'

A long talk *à trois* between him and Ruskin and myself – we were both his guests at Balliol – is remembered by me chiefly from the fact that Jowett kept shuffling his feet in obvious disapproval of some of Ruskin's highly imaginative theories, and that when Ruskin left, and I asked Jowett, 'What do you think of Ruskin's views?' he replied, 'Views? Ruskin has no views. Only phases of thought.'

Ruskin said and did several things in the course of that visit which I keep in my memory. One day he and I

had a long talk at luncheon about the Catholic Revival of the sixteenth century. He kept asking questions and I aired my superficial knowledge of Charles Borromeo, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Philip Neri, and the rest at some length. Suddenly he looked at his watch. 'Come and hear me lecture this afternoon,' he said. I agreed and asked what was to be his subject. 'Oh – chiefly what you have been telling me,' he replied. And he not only kept his word, but kept appealing to me publicly during the lecture. 'I think Mr. Ward will endorse my account of the matter when I say, etc. etc.' My own account had been only moderately accurate, and he was far from accurate in his account of my account. So the young men and women who hung on his words took away with them as much fiction as fact. I now understood the complaints I had heard that he had ceased to prepare his lectures, and that they were sometimes 'almost drivelling.'

He gave a very entertaining and humorous account of the incursions of the tourists into his beloved lake country. He divided England into the 'smoke,' which meant such manufacturing towns as Birmingham or Leeds and the 'land of delight.' 'A screeching engine,' he said, 'drags the creatures of the smoke into the land of delight. It belches forth its stomach full. I fly for refuge to my home. A few hours later I return. No flowers to be seen now. The smoke has bombarded the land of delight with all its horrid artillery of orange peel and ginger beer bottles. The savages have

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gone back to their country but have left a ruin.' He kept inveighing against abuses of various kinds and I asked for his suggestions as to the remedies. 'You wholly mistake my *role*,' he replied, 'the duty of Thomas Carlyle and myself is to howl and make a noise. Other people must find the remedies.' He got me to sing to him, and was fascinated by Salvator Rosa's song *Star Vicino*. After Ruskin had gone to bed, I sang it again. In the middle of the song, the drawing-room door opened and in came Ruskin in a parti-coloured dressing-gown. 'I *had* to get up and greet Salvator Rosa again when I heard him enter,' he said at the end of the song.

In his wholly passionless way Jowett always seemed very glad to see me, and I went to visit him not very long before his death, and found him the same as ever. 'I am not ill, though people say I am, but I have to take care of myself,' he remarked.

I heard that about a year before he died he had a scruple that he had been too cold to some of his relations, whom he had kept rather at a distance. Several of them were therefore invited to come and take leave of him, as he was not expected to recover. He used to get worse towards night, and they gathered round the bedside to see the last of him. On one occasion he beckoned to the nearest, and said to him in a faint and bored voice: 'Tell them they need not stay. I don't think I shall do *anything definite* to-night.'

He got well after this, and I saw him within a few months of his death

when I was staying with J. A. Froude – whom Lord Salisbury had made Professor of History at Oxford – at Cherswell Edge. We talked of Tennyson's funeral and he showed me some of the newspaper articles on the laureateship which had drawn invidious comparisons between Tennyson and the eighteenth-century laureates. 'Why must they disinter poor Nahum Tate?' he said. 'It is very hard on the poor man. They should let him rest in peace.'

RICHARD HUTTON

A closer and more constant relationship than my friendship with Jowett was my intercourse with Richard Hutton. From the time of my father's death, Hutton's kindness to me was very great. He was extremely anxious to keep me to serious work. I was, in theory, he knew, intending to be called to the Bar, and was a member of the Inner Temple. But he saw quite plainly, that this would never come to anything. On the other hand, he saw that I was deeply interested in certain branches of literature, and especially in the philosophy of religious belief, and he regarded it in some respects as a misfortune that my income was sufficient for my wants apart from any profession. Work was apt to be intermittent and desultory. Hutton was very anxious to induce me to work really seriously at literature and philosophy. He asked me to write for the *Spectator*, and I thenceforth did so occasionally as long as he lived.

At the end of 1884, Cardinal

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Vaughan and the Catholic Bishops of England asked me to lecture on modern infidelity to the divinity students at Ushaw, the great ecclesiastical college near Durham. I paid a visit to Cardinal Newman, who encouraged me in the idea, and I drew out a rough scheme which I sent to Hutton just before going abroad for a holiday in June, and he promised to 'meditate deeply' on my notes, and advise on them when next we met. 'I am very glad you are accepting,' he wrote, 'it will compel you to think and work.'

Without ever in the least preaching to me, I felt that he was always anxious to arouse in me more of the intense earnestness which he and my father had in their work for the cause of religion in England, and, moreover, he was critical of any signs of sensitiveness to praise and blame. His own entire insensibility to both is conveyed in the following remarks, written on the occasion of an article I sent him on his little book on Cardinal Newman:

I don't think any article could be kinder, and I hope I may say on the whole juster than yours. If there is anything good in the little book it is the passages from Newman, and the selection of them. I never read a review of any book of mine with pleasure in my life, nor indeed with pain, for I knew beforehand almost everything that can be justly said against it, and what is unjust does not annoy me. But I find myself reading over again and again the little bits of Newman you have

quoted from my little book with increased gratification that I should have made *some* of them, at all events, better known to the world.

He used to let me send him in MS. all that I wrote, and while he criticised any appearance of sensitiveness, I think he endeavoured to turn it to good account by his own judicious mixture of praise and criticism in regard to my compositions. His criticisms were invaluable in giving the clue to what needed amendment. I subjoin two specimens to show his manner. The first is on a chapter in my father's *Life* which I was writing from 1885 to 1889:

I can't say I am satisfied with it as regards manner. It has not the light touch I hoped. It reads laborious. I think you might have given a little more lightness to it by illustrating what *kind of sentences* in Mill and Bentham took hold of your father's mind - quoting one or two as illustrations - and so, too, with Arnold and Whately (whom by the way you give an 'e' that does not belong to his name), just taking a characteristic sentence or two from them to let people hear the note that rang in your father's ears. Though I have suggested nothing but *additions* in this, I think your fifteen sides might easily be compressed into seven or eight, and yet read much lighter than they do. That sentence from Newman describing the typical safe clergyman is just what you wanted. Of course, it is very well known, but it is exactly in place and lightens the

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whole. But somehow (as far as I have gone) I don't think you have hit on the right narrative tone. But I know how difficult it is, and am ashamed of giving such very vague suggestions for mending what I cavil at.

Ever yours most heartily (in spite of my diasgreeableness),

R. H. HUTTON.

The second criticism is on the first draft of an article I wrote for the *National Review*. Frederic Harrison had poked much fun at Spencer's *Religion* and had laughed in particular at the idea of praying to the Unknowable, maintaining that the Unknowable was best expressed by the algebraic symbol X^n . The prayer, he said, should therefore be written: 'O X^n , save us and help us and make us one with Thee.' The prayers in Mr. Harrison's own religion – a Bowdlerized version of Comte's Positivism with its deity of Humanism – appeared to me to suggest an obvious *tu quoque*, and my attack on him in the *National Review* was similar to his attack on Spencer. Humanity, I said, was as unsatisfactory a god to pray to as the Unknowable. Both Spencer and Harrison seemed to use the language and emotions we associate with religion, without any belief which justified them. I referred to the old Eastern story of the Barmecides' feast, in which all the gestures proper to eating were gone through while there was in reality nothing to eat. The religious rites of Positivist and Agnostic alike had the religious hunger natural to the normal

man. Therefore if they both thought that there was nothing else in existence to appease it, they naturally endeavoured to find what satisfactions they could in the Unknowable and Humanity – much as a starving man has been known to gnaw a pair of boots. Here is Hutton's letter on this essay:

March 29, 1884.

I called at your Club hoping you would come and breakfast with me to-day, but found you flown. I have read your MS., but as the Welshman was told, when permitted to go 'to the right with the sheep' in spite of petty larcenies, it was a 'tammed tight squeeze.'

The opening is admirable, indeed it could hardly be better as far as the Barmecides' feast, where, if I had been you, I would have given the philosopher and the Positivist a boot apiece to feed on. Then I think you alter your method too much and do not sufficiently follow your model. You should have made more of the New Year's address on the 'choir invisible.' You should take the 'H' from 'humanity' and explain what humanity means. You should stick to your grieving widow or mother and represent (as you do once for a short time) what the Positivist would have to say to her when she came for consolation. You should tell about her husband or son having – perhaps – joined the choir invisible, and working more *posthumously* for herself and the rest of her family than they had ever done in actual life,

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and represent her reply on such a representation. In fact you should stick to Harrison's method more, as you have done up to the Barmecides' feast. . . . There is the possibility of a very *brilliant* paper here, and the possibility is realised in the first third of it.

I recast the last part of the article in accordance with his suggestions, and he again received me with a leader in the *Spectator*.

From 1882 to 1892 Hutton and I often met, generally at breakfast on Saturday morning at the Devonshire Club, or at the old St. George's Club in Savile Row. These were the occasions which brought me to know him most intimately. We were sometimes *tête-à-tête*, but more often one or two others were present. I soon got to understand his character well, and to appreciate the saying of our common friend, Lord Emly, that the conduct of the *Spectator* was to Hutton a priesthood and an apostolate. Of these breakfasts I will say something more shortly, but in one respect I remember with yet more interest his occasional dinner parties at the Devonshire Club, because on those occasions his remarkable power of dominating his company by sheer intellectual force and simple earnestness was most apparent. He was not in the ordinary sense a brilliant talker. He had, moreover, none of the dramatic gift which makes a conversation picturesque. His deep voice drawled out remarks generally pungent and piercing and, as conversation grew more exciting,

he would at times rise to really eloquent discourse. The profound conviction apparent in his words conveyed an impression of moral earnestness and strength which communicated itself to the whole company. Dean Church once told me of a rather flat debate at the Metaphysical Society which was suddenly raised to the highest level by ten minutes of Hutton's best speech, which had a touch of genuine inspiration. People whom I have known in other societies to have something petty and small in their conversation, were instinctively brought up to his level when in his company.

More than once I met Mr. Gladstone at these dinners, and the intercourse between the two men was extremely interesting to watch. The deference between them was mutual. Hutton had an immense respect and enthusiasm for the great leader. This fact, coupled with the *Spectator's* religious enthusiasm, led someone to say that that paper's motto was: 'There is but one God, and Gladstone is his prophet.' Yet Gladstone's reverence for exceptional moral elevation, which made him hail John Mill in the House of Commons as the 'saint of rationalism,' caused him on his side to treat Hutton with a certain deference even when politics were discussed. And Hutton's aloofness from party politics in the House of Commons enabled him to maintain an ideal unworldliness in his political judgments which was very difficult for one more closely mixed up with party intrigues. Certainly even Gladstone's presence did not prevent

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my feeling that Hutton was the dominant element in the company. It was in its nature, though not in degree, like Dr. Johnson's power of dominating even the most brilliant and distinguished society. This comparison, however, must not be pressed too far. Hutton had none of Johnson's determination to win in the dialectical encounter and was far less brilliant than Johnson. On the other hand, the power of sheer unworldliness was more strongly evidenced by Hutton's position in such discussions from the fact that it was stripped of adventitious aid.

'What a prig!' someone would exclaim on reading the above account; but Hutton was no prig. There was a great deal of the spontaneous exhibition of human nature in his conversation which seldom failed to show his strong likes and dislikes, and his keen sense of humour. He was a good hater, and could criticize most pungently those of whom he disapproved. His mind was not always well-balanced: for example his sentiment about cruelty to animals was almost a monomania. Some of the letters on this subject sent by correspondents to the *Spectator* were so extreme as to read like hoaxes, but they always gained admission. A certain sentimentalism in this and some other matters annoyed some people greatly and made them even disparage his intellect. 'A great *appearance* of intellect,' one well-known man of letters said to me, 'but inside it is all squash.'

His literary antipathies and sympathies were as strong as his personal ones. His aversion to George

Meredith and his enthusiasm for William Watson were both based on intelligible reasons, but both somewhat extravagant. Then as to his humour, he immensely enjoyed hearing or telling a good story. Having known Cardinal Manning from earliest boyhood I had caught his very peculiar intonation, and had some characteristic stories about him which I used to tell Hutton at our small breakfast parties, and in which he revelled. I was dining with Hutton (I think in 1884) as one of a large company, among whom were Gladstone, Liddon, W. E. Forster, Dean Church, and Bishop Magee – afterwards Archbishop of York – and as we talked together after dinner Hutton greatly disconcerted me by saying suddenly: 'Oh, Mr. Gladstone, I want you to hear Wilfrid Ward mimic Archbishop Manning.' There was no help for it, and I told one or two of my stories. These must have touched in Gladstone a spring of some early Oxford memories when he and Manning were familiar friends, for he laughed so much that he nearly rolled out of his chair. He then recovered himself, and became very solemn. 'Do tell me, Mr. Ward,' he said, 'how is my dear old friend the Archbishop? Please give him my kindest remembrances when you see him.'

Hutton's worship for Gladstone was perhaps the deepest personal feeling of the kind he ever had. It was only comparable to his feeling for Newman. But with Newman he had no personal intimacy. Their intercourse was almost entirely by letter.

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The breach between the *Spectator* and the Liberal leader on the Home Rule question was a very heavy blow to Hutton, and Mr. Gladstone himself – so a friend of his told me – also felt it acutely. Hutton once told me an exceedingly interesting story in this connexion. He used often to pass his summer holiday at the inn at Hawarden, lunching and walking with Mr. Gladstone two or three times a week. In 1885 Gladstone wrote to say that he particularly hoped that he was coming that year. Mr. and Mrs. Hutton accordingly went to Hawarden, but the day after their arrival Hutton was taken ill with influenza. Mrs. Gladstone, who was all kindness, determined that the invalid should not be left simply to the mercies of a village inn. She often called to see him for a moment, bringing some delicacy to make his convalescence pleasanter. The old-fashioned landlady had a peculiar way of announcing her. ‘Mrs. Gladstone’ – and then, after a long pause – ‘and the roast partridge.’ Next day it was, ‘Mrs. Gladstone – and the strong beef tea’; another day, ‘Mrs. Gladstone – and the orange jelly.’ This went on until Hutton was practically well, and the landlady one day announced: ‘Mrs. Gladstone’ – and then, in a deep voice, after a very long and solemn pause, ‘and the Prime Minister.’ Mrs. Gladstone very shortly left the two alone for a talk. Hutton was feeling full of gratitude for the kind attentions shown by the family during his illness, and more ready than ever to do anything Gladstone wanted.

Gladstone forthwith broke the Home Rule scheme on him, which fell like a bombshell. ‘There is nothing I should more value,’ he said, ‘than the support of the *Spectator*.’ Hutton, who had long been a staunch follower of Gladstone’s severer Irish policy, was quite unable to follow him in his *volte face*. Mr. Gladstone said he hoped that before he left the room Hutton would promise to support him. Hutton had not the courage to refuse outright then and there, but he had sufficient strength to insist on time to make up his mind. After an hour and a half Mr. Gladstone departed, and directly the magical presence was removed, Hutton, weak though he was, forthwith packed his portmanteau and returned to London, and wrote from thence the uncompromising dissent from which he never afterwards swerved.

The Saturday breakfast parties were, as I have said, very frequent. Generally I used to breakfast with Hutton at the Devonshire Club; sometimes he with me at the St. George’s Club, now defunct, in Savile Row. We were rarely more than four at breakfast, and the actual quality of his conversation was at its best in this small group, although, as I have said, his power of dominating the conversation when large numbers were present made his larger gatherings in that respect more memorable. But he ‘let himself go’ at the breakfasts. He needed to be wound up (so to speak) before his fine intellect did itself justice. And I have heard him say curiously pointless and flat things when he was

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very tired. Part of his mind seemed to go to sleep. A certain absence of the artist's close sensitiveness to those he talked to added to the sheer force of his conversation. He had strong and deeply felt views which he brought out with rather slow articulation. He had not the modern way of softening angles or trimming to suit his company. You had his full mind for what it was worth, and you knew it generally meant something deep-rooted in him and not a mere phase of thought. Feeling in him was very deep, but not quick or responsive. He had not a quick perception of the play of thought around him. There was something in his mental vision corresponding to his physical vision. He would hold a book quite close to his best eye (he was extremely short-sighted), and become entirely absorbed in it; and so, too, he became absorbed in one definite line of thought – at times a very subtle one – to the exclusion of all else, even of much that ought to qualify his conclusions in practice.

It was at the breakfasts that his wide and accurate knowledge of literature became most apparent. I have seldom heard better conversation on our greater poets than between him and Aubrey de Vere, who was often his guest or mine. He had a specially close verbal knowledge of Dickens, and he appeared to take a kind of physical pleasure in his long quotations from the sayings of Mr. Pecksniff.

These breakfasts had a certain importance when matters of political moment were to the fore, for the word

of the *Spectator* was powerful, and it was on the cards that our conversations might lead to some strong pronouncement from Hutton on the following Saturday. This was the more possible from an impulsiveness which was one of his attractive characteristics. Frequent guests on these occasions were the late Lord Emly, Aubrey de Vere, Canon Malcolm MacColl, and myself. After the Home Rule Bill, he and MacColl used to have disputes so violent that once or twice I became alarmed, but they always parted as friends, though Hutton would speak when MacColl had left, half laughingly, half angrily, of 'that little fighting cock,' or 'Gladstone's black dwarf.'

The only faint suggestion of the *gourmet* that I ever saw in Hutton was his keen appreciation of tea at these breakfasts. He would have a mixture of four different kinds of tea, and would continue to sip one or the other with keen relish long after breakfast was over, as a parson of the old school sipped his port.

Several persons whom I afterwards came to know well were first met by me at Hutton's breakfast table. He usually brought together people who were in some ways congenial spirits, either in themselves or from a common interest in some event of the moment. If I remember rightly I first came to know both Dean Church and Dr. Talbot, later Bishop of Winchester, in this way.

I have spoken above of Hutton's singular unworldliness which made itself felt in conversing with him. It

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was a bond of union between him and my father, and I will endeavour to particularize my meaning by comparing the two men. Tennyson in his epitaph on my father calls him 'most unworldly of mankind,' and, while Hutton could hardly be more unworldly, he had certain qualities in conversation which gave one a more constant sense of unworldliness, or at least of aloofness from all pleasures of the world, in him than in my father. First of all there was in my father the strong dramatic and musical taste which made the play and the opera so very large a part of his life. Allied with this was the emotional temperament which made him once say 'Had I not been enthusiastically religious, I should probably have been enthusiastically profligate.' This was quite absent in Hutton, who was the more exclusively spiritual and intellectual. He lacked the passionate element in all except the burning fire of purely religious passion. Again, my father enjoyed the game of conversation far more than Hutton did, and rather liked to charm people. 'I hate being called a clever man,' he would say, 'but am delighted when I hear of people saying I am an agreeable man.' I call an instance which illustrates this: old Miss Georgina Nicholls, a daughter of the late Sir George Nicholls, and a connexion of my mother's, was a strong Protestant. She had never met my father and, having a great horror of him as a Papist incarnate, always avoided him. Once by chance, they found themselves *tête-à-tête* in the same drawing-room, in the

house of a common relation. When they were seen together by some of us children through the drawing-room window, we were terrified as to the consequences; but on entering we found Miss Nicholls wreathed in smiles. 'What a charming man Mr. Ward is!' she exclaimed when he had gone; and my father remarked, when he heard of this: 'I was *determined* to make her like me.'

There was nothing in Hutton at all resembling this; and the absence in him of the slightest approach to even the most superficial vanity added to one's sense of his unworldliness. He was in consequence more exclusive in his likes and dislikes than my father. He clung with close tenacity to his friends, and they were a comparatively small group. To one of his dearest friends he wrote almost daily. He liked a blunt man if he was very straightforward; and was quite intolerant of any criticism of Cardinal Vaughan, whom he admired immensely. To Manning, on the other hand, he did less than justice. There was perhaps occasionally an element of the oracular in Manning's sayings, but it was owing, I think, partly to a want of understanding in Hutton, and to a certain absence in him of the instinct for social life, and of realisation of the demands on one in Manning's great public position, that he regarded such manifestations as unreal and wanting in sincerity. They were really often the effort to meet exacting requirements and great expectations amid a large and miscellaneous company of his admirers.

Wilfrid Ward

The occasions on which the singular tenderness of Hutton's feelings came out most deeply were illness or trouble to his friends. I remember commenting to him on an article in the *Spectator* which expressed a far more flattering opinion of a certain author than that which I knew he really held, and he told me that the author in question was very ill, and he hoped the article might cheer her up. If a friend were seriously ill, Hutton would visit him or her daily, bringing presents each time. Such illnesses caused him grief to an extent which I have never witnessed in anyone else.*

Hutton was not a good letter writer, for he was too much in earnest to think of the form of his letters, and had not the artist's instinct which might have counteracted such inattention. But their very simplicity and directness make them to some degree an illustration of his character, while they are often a valuable record of his views and recollections.

On an essay of mine which dealt with the Saints as the persons whose insight we should naturally trust in the matter of religious belief, he once wrote:

This is an interesting paper, but I think you might strengthen the latter part of it. Of course, what would be said was that Newton and the mathematicians can verify their deductions by showing that they can predict what no one understood how to predict before they discovered these new theorems: and that *there-*

fore you might become their disciples and trust them. Can nothing of the same kind be said for accepting the moral guidance of the saints? Have they not verified their discernment of spiritual things, by practically encountering and defying temptations and bewilderments of which we all know the strength? Cannot we show that they are differentiated from enthusiasts and fanatics by the singular self-possession and presence of mind by the help of which they kept their heads above the giddy whirl of life, as in the case of St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri, or, as I should say, Keble or George Herbert?

The word 'agnostic' is now part of the English language. I once asked Hutton to put down for me in writing the particulars of the occasion at which he was present when the word was first invented. The following is his reply:

It was at a preliminary meeting, before the foundation of the Metaphysical Society, held I think at either Knowles's house, the Hollies, Clapham Common, or at the Deanery, Westminster, in Stanley's time, in 1869 – I believe the former – that Huxley said that far from being an Atheist, his faith could not be better expressed than by the inscription on the Athenian altar that St. Paul took as the text of his sermon at the Areopagus *ἀγνώτω θεῶν*. He could not pretend to say what the ultimate power was like, he regarded it as an enigma that he would not

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venture to characterize, but far from denying its existence, he recognized it though he held its nature to be unknown and perhaps inscrutable. He wished to call himself an agnostic. Tennyson I think, and Manning were there, and Martineau certainly, and I and Knowles and probably several others, but I cannot say now who else was there. But I can answer for it that Huxley identified himself with the Athenians who had raised an altar to the unknown god, and did not think that St. Paul had any good grounds for his belief that he could remove the veil and 'declare' him.

I think this is all that I can tell you, but of this much I am sure.

His attitude towards the Catholic

religion was remarkable. I think he had learned quite early to take the somewhat rigid view as to its obligatory teaching which my father took. And he could not concur in positions which seemed to him impossibly narrow. On the other hand, the priests he met – Father Whitty, Father Gordon, Cardinal Vaughan, and others – impressed him deeply, and his deference to any Catholic ecclesiastic was quite quaint in its outward manifestations. I remember meeting in the street with a priest in my company, and saying: 'Do you know Father A.B.?' Hutton had been too blind to recognise the priest, but at once took off his wideawake hat, and said with energy, 'I have had the great honour and privilege of meeting Father A.B. more than once,' and he kept his hat off while he talked to him.

The Other Side

by R. Ellis Roberts

I

WORDS are magic. Conventional magic if you will; a magic which, in our commonplace hands, too quickly and easily loses its power and significance, becomes little better than the stereotyped slips handed out to the anxious by the fortune-tellers of the kerbstone. Yet in moments of exultation, for all of us, words will regain their magic. In time of love, in time of fear, in time or moods of religious adoration a word will once more return to its old beauty, and become the lovely or desperate or sublime symbol which it was when the first man, gazing in wonder at the world of creation, began to name things. When we are children, nearly all words retain that magical bloom – a child will name its doll, and never cease from its delight in murmuring, again and again, that beloved, discovered title. Once more, in our infancy, the glorious experience of Adam is repeated. Not even use will dull, for a child, the profound, intense quality of a naming word: often, it is true, humour and ridicule are invented thus, as the child grows older, and in the schoolboy's demand for the surrender of his name by the

new boy there is a relic of the old savage belief that a power over the name is power over the person. Before this comes, however, it is beauty and intimacy and reality which a child finds in the names of things and of persons and of places. When we are adult this resurrection of beauty in symbolic syllables, ordinary and outmoded, is rare; but it is the perpetual privilege and power of the great masters of literature. It is strongest in the poets, strongest of all in those poets who have a mystical philosophy of life, the poets for whom all life is sacramental, or all life symbolic, or all life the pattern of some permanent and eternal reality. William Blake said that when he saw the sun rise he did not see a round disc of fire, somewhat like a guinea, but an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!' He did not question his corporeal eye any more than he would have questioned a window concerning a view. He looked through it, and not with it. And in the strength of that doctrine he was enabled to write poetry which has not been excelled in English

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for its supreme quality of mystical suggestion, for its power to take us to the other side.

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

The poets who have no *expressed* philosophy yet achieve this same ecstasy: the words are full not only of their obvious meaning; but weighty with something which will always be unexpressed, something which was not even in the poet's conscious mind, until the words themselves broke from him into the beauty of strange truth. We can all remember such sentences, for instance, in Keats, who is the most sensuous of great poets, and who yet is drawn into that other world of symbol – 'Magic casements, opening on the foam of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.'

Words, in short, which are originally only the symbols of things, become, in a sense, things in themselves, and have for the sensitive a suggestiveness apart from and beyond their meaning, although never quite detached from that meaning. Any of us can prove this by a very simple experiment. If a man takes a piece of paper and writes a word on it twenty or thirty or forty times, each written under the other, he will find that the word takes on a kind of independent life. A word, for instance, like 'grim' or 'awe' becomes a larger symbol than its mere meaning warrants. It is in this strange power of

repeated words to impose more than their meaning that we find the origin of all allegorical and symbolic literature. The power of repetition, either spoken or written, either in chant or refrain, is indisputable: and once we have an artist, however primitive, recognizing that power, we have the beginnings of a literature which is poetic, imaginative and mystical, as distinct from a literature which is merely practical, prosaic and representative. Language may be given us to express our thoughts, or disguise them, but literature is given us to express not only our thoughts, but our emotions and our imaginative desires. It is not merely interpretative, it is creative; it is not merely translation, it is transfiguration.

The earliest method of saying, in language, more than you mean, is symbol; but in literature the earliest conscious method is allegory. The poets, it is true, have always moved towards symbolism, but not always moved consciously. I am not sure, for instance, that even Virgil (who was not at all an unsophisticated poet) quite realized with how much meaning and beauty he burdened his line *Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt* (lines so burdened that Frederic Myers required twice as many words for his translation – 'Tears call for tears, and sorrow sorrow brings And mortal hearts are moved by mortal things'); but it is plain enough that Aesop and Phaedrus knew precisely what they were doing. It is only the greatest allegorists who share the gift of the

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symbolist masters, and reach even beyond their allegory. Swift and Bunyan, for instance, our two greatest writers of allegory in English, do produce a result almost as great as if they used symbol: Bunyan in his picture of man, wretchless, abandoned, hardened and desperate so long as he resists grace; and Swift in his dreadful drama of a race too mean and too despicable to be worthy either of love or of pity, so long as there were animals for us to admire or respect.

In the earlier authors – whether poets or prose-writers – we rarely find any conscious effort to express the mystery behind ordinary phenomena. After all, the power of Bunyan and the horror of Swift consist in each taking the facts as they seem to him: for Bunyan man is predestined to Hell or Heaven, for Swift he is a creature of filthy habits, unpleasant manners and mean ideals. In the mystical poets of Spain, and in our own John Donne, we find something which approaches more nearly the magical attitude. It is difficult to think that Donne, with his natural sensitiveness, was other than fully aware of the deep evocativeness of his line, ‘A bracelet of bright hair about the bone.’ Yet one has to remember that even in inferior authors occasionally one meets a phrase devastating in its mystical appeal, like that sentence of Maturin’s – ‘In the night all colours disappear and despair has no diary.’ It is not, however, until authors become more conscious, self-conscious, if you like, that we find them suddenly and

sensitively aware of the fact that the words they use can express, nay *will* express, more than the authors know, that there is a bright and a dark world, independent, alive, mysterious, into which words will lead them; that, in short, words, which were originally symbols, have become realities, and will make a truthful and lively pattern of their own. Art, in the modern slang, ceases to be representational and becomes expressionist: we can see best what happens, perhaps, if we take concrete instances in the literature of creative imagination – Falstaff is more real than Henry VIII, Hamlet than Edward VI, and Pickwick than William IV. Yet they are all made of words.

Or, to put it in another way, consider how many meanings are now signified by the word ‘Rose.’ It has blossomed from being the mere label of a flower, lovely as that is, to become the symbol for a whole microcosm of beauty – ‘My love is like a red, red rose’ – a rose where born, and named with what title of honour? Roses of Paestum, Rose of Sharon, Rose of the Garden of Naishapur, the Mystic Rose, ‘God made himself an awful Rose of Dawn,’ ‘the Rose of the Cross,’ until you find in a modern poet’s writings lines and phrases which can only yield their full burden of loveliness to those who are aware of the symbolism which has grown up out of that one flower, ‘Red Rose, Proud Rose, Sad Rose of all my days’; ‘The Rose upon the Rood of Time’; ‘The Rose of the World.’

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II

The power of words, this ability they possess to evoke as well as to express, to transform as well as to explain, to create as well as to copy, while it interests all who speak or read, is of surpassing interest and excitement to the artist. Every artist has, among his other problems, this in chief – that he works with material, with which he must be on terms of essential amity. He must, that is, respect, understand, and take into account the idiosyncrasies of his material. This is obvious enough in painting or architecture. It can be seen plainly, for instance, in the difference between an oil-painting and a water-colour. Or in sculpture, the stubbornness of the stone or the marble is the sculptor's opportunity. It will direct, or divert his thought and ambitions: most bad art springs from a misuse of material, from the effort to express, say, in bronze or marble, what should be expressed in paint. Of all artists, however, the author must seem to get but little out of this interchange, this affectionate battle, with his material. His material is language – a set of conventional counters the use of which he has to share with all of us, counters whose meaning is predetermined, and whose beauty becomes worn and commonplace. Yet if there is anything in what I have written of the separate life which words take to themselves, the author is finally the luckiest of the artists: for words do, to most of us, suggest ideas more immediately than does sound, or colour, or

line, or form, whether sculptural or architectural. And whatever the world beyond phenomena is or is not, most of us believe it to be a world of idea – I do not mean merely intellectual idea, but imaginative, emotional, intellectual and spiritual idea. And to that world literature seems to me to have the best key.

We are accustomed to meet in poetry words and phrases which convey, even to the careless reader, more than their meaning. Often we do not investigate the processes by which the poet achieves that result: I believe, in spite of much modern criticism, that the result is often not the result of a conscious process in the poet's mind. His memory quickens his imagination, or his imagination calls on images half-forgotten. Blake's tyger burning in the forests of the night, Keats' magic case-ments, these are sudden things, not unintellectual but not the consequence of deliberate thought, as are the conceits of a seventeenth-century metaphysical poet. In poetry these things are not unexpected, and have appeared since poetry was: in prose their arrival is more recent, and less generally recognized. Often, especially in the early prose-writers, they come from the author's desire to establish communication with a world, an intimacy with which the poet assumes. The early efforts need not detain us long. They are all connected with what we may call the literature of Gothic terror. It is easier to scare than to exalt: and the first attempts to lift the curtain of the invisible in fiction were attempts to terrify. Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe,

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'Monk' Lewis, Charles Robert Maturin – their names are as well-known as their books are unread. I have only two things to say about them. It is noticeable that this Gothic revival, as it was called, did synchronize with an odd literary fraud which familiarized people with the outlines of a literature fuller, than any other Western literature, of the power of evoking mystery, of suggesting continuously a little more than is actually said. Just as we should not have had Sheridan Le Fanu or even Wilkie Collins if Mrs. Radcliffe's ghosts had not chattered their chains, and Horace Walpole had not opened to us the mechanical horror of the *Castle of Otranto*; so we should never have had either Walpole or Mrs. Radcliffe had it not been for MacPherson's *Ossian*. I know how unreadable that sham grandiloquence is to-day: but it would be ungrateful and unfair not to remember that we do owe to MacPherson this one important thing. He, by his verbose and pompous rewriting of the Gaelic legends, persuaded an age the literature of which was predominantly prosaic and non-magical – does not Dr. Johnson analyse *Lycidas* as if it were a college testimonial or a letter of introduction? – to read and admire a literature which is passionately and spontaneously mystical, a literature in which every blade of grass has a soul, every flower a delicate spirit, and the great trees grow wonderfully in the power of their inhabiting gods.

Secondly, the Gothic novelists showed their successors how *not* to try to suggest mystery or the supernatural.

It is easy enough now to laugh at the over-elaborate mechanism, the carefully explained phantasms and horrors of Mrs. Radcliffe: but unless someone with real talent had tried this method of making our flesh creep – as it did make our great-grandmothers' creep, as we know from the history of Catherine Morland – the greater men, Poe, Maeterlinck, Conrad, de la Mare, might have wasted time with those methods of the nursery. The Walpoles and Radcliffes succeeded in terrifying our ancestors with a regiment of polite and plausible phantoms – and to-day the real masters of terror can accomplish more with a half-heard footfall, or a blown leaf on an unknown road, or the sudden sight, from an unexpected angle, of something too familiar to be anything but terrifying.

The tale of terror was, no doubt, a by-way in European fiction. The novel originally is little more than an enlarged anecdote – it remains that even in the *Decameron*. After the Renaissance we find first the novel of incident, gradually widening into the novel of manners as in Fielding and Smollett; then the novel of sentiment, as in Sterne and Richardson, and finally the novel of character, as in Jane Austen and Thackeray. There are, of course, novels and novelists who refuse categories – Scott and Dickens alone break up our attempted subdivisions; but nevertheless, most fiction published before the Victorian age can be classified as I have suggested, with the exception of the Tale of Terror.

It is, then, to this rather despised

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and neglected branch of fiction, the early hair-raisers (which I fancy must have been the favourite reading, if he had any, of the Fat Boy in the *Pickwick Papers*), that we owe this most fascinating development of modern fiction. It is a rather distant relationship by now, perhaps; but none the less authentic and legitimate, and it can be very easily traced by those who care for such comparative criticism. It is evident, is it not? that at the close of the eighteenth century the novel was as exhausted as it was despised. The genius of the age, the talent of the age, and, alas! the mere journeyman industry of the age, were all occupied with poetry. I know the exceptions—three women, one of genius, the other two of very great talent (now scarcely recognized) were faithful to the novel: Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth and Susan Ferrier – and it is amusing to speculate whether we should not still be reading Joanna Bailie had she devoted to fiction the time she wasted on unactable and almost unreadable plays. Then came Scott, and by his unprecedented and spontaneous mixture of fiction and history gave to the novel new life and new influence. There is scarcely an author in any branch of literature during the first half of the nineteenth century, whether English or European, who is not indebted to Sir Walter – Hugo, Dumas, Mérimée, Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman are all his children in some degree: he took the properties of the Gothic revival, set them in a more life-like composition on a more real stage and then left them there, ready to the hands of the authors

of the Catholic revival. And when he did not influence by example, he influenced by reaction. A distaste for and distrust of the mere ‘tushery’ and tawdriness of some of his successors can be shown to be responsible for the literary movement sometimes called realistic, but more properly naturalistic. If Hugo and Dumas are disciples of Scott, Zola and Flaubert are the rebels against a tradition the force of which they acknowledged by the vehemence of their revulsion. But it is in their work – especially in the work of Zola and Huysmans – that we can discern another spirit at work. Strive as they may to be purely informative, to be Baedekers of the external life of man, to be nothing but registers of sensuous emotions and impressions, something is too strong for them. Huysmans deliberately and consciously abandoned the naturalistic position, and devoted himself to a mystical reinterpretation of life. Zola unconsciously – governed as it were by the mere power of the images his words evoke – becomes the epic novelist of the great, inorganic governances of life – the mob, the locomotive, the huge city, the indifferent and abiding soil, the dreadful spirit of war. Flaubert, who wishes to paint one woman faithfully, paints not Emma Bovary but an eternal portrait of the sensuous and sensual woman, a portrait of a soul damned, as all must be damned who pursue pleasure instead of happiness, and remember no duties save those which others owe to them. Even Maupassant, the most objective of all the great story-tellers, cannot keep up

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his rôle of the supreme, indifferent reporter; and the angel of pity, as well as of irony, broods over that little masterpiece *Boule de Suif*.

And if that is true of his naturalistic stories, how much truer is it that the very force of his naturalism drove the great story-teller to his excursions in the supernatural. It is as if the artist in him conquered the theorist, and his supreme success in rendering the world of visible and sensuous things impelled him to recognize that he had left out something as real as it was incalculable. So to balance the unexampled observation of *La Maison Tellier* we have the terror of *Horla*. Maupassant looked at life and suddenly knew that there was more than he could see. He looked in the mirror, and, peering sardonically over his shoulder, its grim visage close to his own startled countenance, there was that whose existence became more real, more troubling than anything he had seen in the flesh, something which he had tried to forget in the excitement and the lassitudes of the body.

Something has broken in. Something on the other side of the door, something behind the curtain, has troubled the naturalists: they work in the lighted room, and as they look at the dark windows they can see nothing but blackness, no beyond, no unseen meaning, no unlikely interruption – but suddenly the darkness is troubled, there is a stir in the air, the faintest tapping, scarcely perceptible on the friendly and familiar glass. They throw open the window: and something comes in. What is it? And whence does it come?

III

I can answer those questions most easily by quotations. The first is the opening of Scott's *My Aunt Margaret's Mirror*.

My Aunt Margaret was one of that respected sisterhood, upon whom devolve all the trouble and solicitude incidental to the possession of children, excepting only that which attends their entrance into the world. We were a large family of very different dispositions and constitutions. Some were dull and peevish – they were sent to Aunt Margaret to be amused; some were rude, romping, and boisterous – they were sent to Aunt Margaret to be kept quiet, or rather, that their noise might be removed out of hearing: those who were indisposed were sent with the prospect of being nursed – those who were stubborn, with the hope of their being subdued by the kindness of Aunt Margaret's discipline; in short, she had all the various duties of a mother, without the credit and dignity of the maternal character. The busy scene of her various cares is now over – of the invalids and the robust, the kind and the rough, the peevish and pleased children, who thronged her little parlour from morning to night, not one now remains alive but myself; who, afflicted by early infirmity, was one of the most delicate of her nurselings, yet, nevertheless, have outlived them all.

The second, which was written

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less than twenty years after, is the beginning of *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was – but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me – upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain – upon the bleak walls – upon the vacant eye-like windows – upon a few rank sedges – and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees – with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium – the bitter lapse into everyday life – the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart – an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it – I paused to think – what was it

that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? . . . It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down – but with a shudder even more thrilling than before – upon the remodelled and inverted images of the grey sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Something has happened. It is this. Poe was the first story-teller to be fully and consciously (sometimes too consciously) sensitive to the aliveness and separateness of his material. To Scott words are still, so far as his deliberate purpose goes, means of communication merely, modes of speech conveying information. To Poe a word is an image, almost a world. Always, at least, the shadow of a world dreamed of, and so more real than a world known by waking sight. He gains his best effects simply and naturally. He does not usually take refuge in the supernatural or the abnormal; he shows the abnormality behind the normal, and sees and expresses a nature which is only a veil for the supernatural. The early Gothic novelist forgot that the mind, keyed up to the wonderful and the unexpected, was less likely to be terrified by magni-

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ficent and horrible monsters in monstrous surroundings than by lesser terrors when encountered amid everyday scenes. A knock on the door is enough, as Shakespeare showed in *Macbeth*, to make suspense unbearable. Poe makes suspense out of any incident in life, and all his suspense is intolerable. In every story the reader lives on the edge of the pit, and the catastrophe approaches like the pendulum.

It is to Poe, first of all, that we owe the transformation of modern fiction. Narrow as is his range, special and curious as is his genius, I know of no author of the early nineteenth century, except Scott, who has had a greater influence in European letters. To his work, translated by Baudelaire, I believe we owe the curious inability of the naturalists to keep supernature, the ideal, out of their books. They could dismiss romance, they could deny sentiment, they could exile fancy, but the world behind the word breaks in on them, and turns Zola into an epic poet and Huysmans into a Catholic mystic. Poe's indirect influence, indeed, is more important than his direct. Poe, in his poetry and in his prose alike, is not one of the great authors of the world; he is, shall we say, the caviare, the liqueur, the rather exotic element in the feast of literature. I would be the last to deny the fascination of Poe's own work, and that of his followers. It makes the strongest appeal to me, whether in Poe himself, in the early plays of Maeterlinck, in the difficult and doubtful adventures

of Mr. Arthur Machen. Yet my fondness for this kind of literature cannot blind me to the fact that it is a minor kind. Just as Donne is not so great as Shakespeare, or Crashaw as Milton, so it would be foolish to pretend that Poe is as great as Conrad, or Maeterlinck as Ibsen. What we must remember and be grateful for is that, had it not been for Poe, we might never have found in the greater artists that inner and mystic beauty which distinguishes their best works. The first man who consciously went to the other side found there, not always, but usually, horror and cruelty and a desperate desolation; since him others have found there beauty and peace and a loveliness of eternal reality—but Poe showed them the way.

Only one author has ever conveyed the sense of terror as clearly and fascinatingly as Poe. That is the early Maurice Maeterlinck. In *The Death of Tintagiles* you have the greatest drama of suspense which our generation has known. Ygraine and Bellangere in that play discuss with the old tutor Aglovale how they can keep their little brother Tintagiles from the wrath of the Queen. Tintagiles has just arrived at the castle where the Queen lives. She is never seen by the sisters, or by Aglovale. She is seen only by her servants. She never appears in the play, except as a dreadful expectation, a burden on the soul, an obsession of the mind. Maeterlinck draws her castle for us in a dialogue between Tintagiles and Ygraine.

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YGRAINE My sister and I have gone on living here ever since we were born, not daring to understand the things which happened. . . . I have lived a long time in this island, and I might as well have been born blind; yet it all seemed natural to me. . . . A bird that flew, a leaf that trembled, a rose that opened . . . these were events to me. Such silence has always reigned here that a ripe fruit falling in the park would draw faces to the window. . . . And no one seemed to have any suspicion . . . but one night I learned that there must be something besides . . . I wished to escape and I could not. . . . Have you understood what I am telling you?

TINTAGILES Yes, yes, little sister; I can understand anything. . . .

YGRAINE Then let us not talk any more about these things . . . one does not know. . . . Do you see the castle, there, behind the dead trees which poison the horizon, do you see the castle, there, right down in the valley?

TINTAGILES I see something very black—is that the castle, sister Ygraine?

YGRAINE Yes, it is very black. . . . It lies far down amid a mass of gloomy shadows. . . . It is there we have to live. . . . They might have built it on the top of the great mountains which surround it. . . . The mountains are blue in the daytime. . . . One could have breathed. One could have looked down on the sea and on the plains beyond the

cliffs. . . . But they preferred to build it deep down in the valley; too low even for the air to come. . . . It is falling in ruins, and no one troubles. . . . The walls are crumbling; it might be fading away in the gloom. . . . There is only one tower which time does not touch . . . it is there that the Queen has her throne. . . . It is enormous; and its shadow is always on the house.

Maeterlinck has long ago abandoned his early manner; and with its abandonment has apparently lost the power of evocation which he showed so amazingly in the *Three Plays for Marionettes* and in *Pelléas and Mélisande*. The literature of the other side is now chiefly English literature. Henry James, Mr. Conrad, Mr. Kipling, Mr. Wells, Violet Hunt, May Sinclair have all attempted it—sometimes the mystic element is the whole story, more often, especially in Conrad, it is in solution. The Poe method, the method, that is, of mixing the ordinary and the extraordinary is the method for conveying horror. It is the method chiefly employed, with devastating effect, by one of the greatest of modern poets, Mr. de la Mare, as in his *Seaton's Aunt*. And Mr. de la Mare has found in the other side a new loveliness, an undiscovered beauty. He has expressed superbly, in a single passage, the very core of this essay. It comes in the story called *The Creatures*, and tells us the reflections of the traveller when the strange companions, in whose creation

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'animal and angel had connived,' take him through their garden.

'Never was actuality so close to dream. It was not only an unknown country, slipped in between these placid hills, on which I had chanced in my ramblings. I had entered for a few brief moments a strange region of consciousness. I was treading, thus accompanied, amid a world of welcoming and fearless life – oh, friendly to me! – the paths of man's imagination, the kingdom from which thought and curiosity, vexed scrutiny and lust – a lust it may be for nothing more impious than the actual – had prehistorically proved the insensate means of his banishment. "Reality," "Consciousness": had he for "the time being" unwittingly, unhappily missed his way? Would he be led back at length to that garden wherein cockatrice and basilisk bask, harmlessly, at peace?

'I speculate now. In that queer, yes, and possibly sinister company, sinister only because it was alien to me, I did not speculate. In their garden, the familiar was become the strange – "the strange" that lurks in the inmost heart, unburdens its richness in trance, flings its light and gilding upon love, gives heavenly savour to the intemperate bowl of passion, and is the secret of our incommunicable pity.'

Literature lost something very precious when authors abandoned the drama of Qualities: when, in the excitement and pleasure of the discovery of individual temperament and mood, they began to put on the stage or into stories actual people instead of the old heroes, who were masked in a mood of sublimity, or pity, or terror, instead of the Vices and Virtues which stepped so austere and certainly on the boards. Patience gave way to Griselda; Luxuria was banished by Tarquin; in place of Age we had Lear, while Othello outcries the ancient Jealousy. The gain was great; but there was a loss. That loss is redressed by the poets and novelists of the other side. We still have the individual, we still have, for our curious examination, the temperaments of actual men and women; but the modern who sees beyond what he sees, whose thought tells him that there are things no man can compass by thought, who knows that the observer has observed nothing of a man if he stop at observation, who understands that unless there be a pattern, that which appears to spoil the pattern is unreal – he it is who restores to us the simplicity of truth, which supports and denies, corroborates and frustrates the apparent multiplicity of the temporal world by a resolute appeal to the world of eternity.

Estelle

by E. J. Scovell

I

ESTELLE was always out in the streets. She liked being there; she had never thought why. Her mother and her elder sister kept the house clean and tidy, and her mother cooked meals for the family; she herself had her keep for nothing; the floors might rot under dust, her mother said, and the younger children might starve, for all she would care. In the bedroom that she shared with her sister, she left her drawers half-open and her clothes lying about on chairs and the floor, and the powder that she splashed on her face was splashed on the dressing-table too. Her sister, Doreen, was a teacher in an elementary school, and busy enough without housework, but she always tidied up after Estelle. No one would have thought that Estelle came of such a good family, that her father was a clerk and her sister a school-teacher, and that she herself had spent a year (though it had done her no good) at the secondary school. Her parents and her sister sighed and grumbled over her, but they were never very angry; they could not be angry, for they had not the power; and besides they weakened to her because she was

so pretty, and, in her innocent selfishness, so exasperating, so disarming.

She liked being out in the streets; she liked fun. It entertained her to see people whom she did not know hurrying or loitering by; and to talk to the boys and girls whom she did know sketchily; to lounge with them in little groups, or to smile and swing her hips scornfully at the teasing, kissing noises the boys made in the evening, when they passed her on the canal embankment; to go to the cinema with a boy, too, now and then, and be petted and kissed in the dark. She took all these encounters as easily as fine weather, and did not trouble what boy it was that kissed her.

All this she liked very well; but she was just as happy to be sitting by herself on the wall of the canal at the end of her street, letting the water, and whatever else there was to see, slip through her idle mind, unnoticed. Sometimes gulls came up the canal from the tidal river; she watched their path through the air without knowing it. Barges often passed, and she waved to the men on them, and to their sallies shouted replies in the same

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style; it was natural, like breathing, to her.

One day, when she was seventeen, a boy called Charlie Mallam asked her to spend the next Sunday with him in the deer-park outside the city. 'I don't mind,' she said; but she smiled at him; her smile was like an angel's. On Sunday, when she went out, nobody asked her where she was going; and she met Charlie at the pillar box, and they took a bus out to the park. There he bought her an ice from a cart, and they sauntered under the sparse oaks, and watched the deer grazing, or still with alarm, and other visitors to the park; she took her hat off and sat down with her back against the trunk of an oak. Everything pleased her; when he said 'What about a bite now?' she was ready for that too, and they went out to a little café on the edge of the park. The afternoon was much hotter, even, than the morning had been. They went into a less frequented part of the park, walking slowly, drenched in sunlight, which made them sleepy too. He put his arm round her, and when they came to a tree that he liked the look of he spread his coat in its shade, covering the patchy grass and bare, baked earth; the bracken did not come up close round the trunks of the oaks. They lay down on his coat, he with one arm under her; and with his free hand he began to play with her hair and to fondle her body through her thin dress. She was quite contented; she smiled, and wriggled, and drew herself in closer to him.

As the afternoon went on the

shadow of the tree moved, and soon the boy and girl were in sunlight from the waist down. Just as Estelle was beginning to notice how much too hot she was, she heard voices, a man's and a woman's; they were some way off but they came nearer; soon there was also the sound of their feet pushing through the bracken. Estelle and Charlie lay still, as though they were dead, or as the deer would stand still, freezing to stone. The man and woman came very near; their foolish, startling words were audible: 'So I told him again, she being what she is . . .' said the man; 'A lot of good . . . you talk,' said the woman, ending on a sob. When they spoke again they seemed farther off; the words were indistinct.

Estelle had had her eyes shut all the while and did not know if the man and woman had seen her and Charlie. But when their voices had gone altogether she sat up, and looked thoughtfully over the dark green, glowing bracken. Quite near to them was a little copse, thick and not easily penetrable, of laurel or rhododendron and fancy shrubs, with taller trees among them; it was surrounded by an iron fence to keep out the deer. Estelle turned her eyes down to Charlie; he was somnolent and brooding on the ground. 'Let's have a look in there,' she said; and she got up and walked to the fence without looking back; she did not consider why she did it. As she sat astride the fence, in the moment of crossing it, she turned her head and smiled back at Charlie her benign and

Estelle

candid smile; then climbed down and parted the laurel bushes, and passed into the centre of the grove.

Charlie followed her at his leisure.

II

Estelle was disappointed that Charlie did not ask her to spend any other Sunday with him in the park. With the other boys it was the same as it had been: they still liked to talk to her and tease her, and to snatch kisses in doorways or under the evening plane-trees down by the canal; and she liked it just as well. But Charlie would look at her gloweringly across the street and then, if she smiled or pushed out her lips, come over to her with a sort of unwilling willingness; and though he stared at her and, when it was dark enough, would kiss her roughly, he never had anything pleasant to say. In truth he was uneasy; and, though Estelle was an ignorant girl, at last she guessed the reason of his uneasiness; the idea of pregnancy came to her too. She sent it away at once. It passed into her mind and out, and there was nothing – a blank, a vacancy, a curious whiteness – where it had been.

'I'm tired,' she said one day to two girl-friends who were strolling with her on the embankment. They left her propped against the wall. She climbed on to it and after a while, with her legs still dangling over the street pavement, she leaned her body sideways and turned her head till her cheek was on the stone copping, her eyes searching

the canal. She thought how easy it would be to slip down into it, and how comfortable to be there; a little later (it was eight o'clock and still full daylight), when it would be dark, except for the scarce street-lights, and there would be no one about. Between apathy and foreboding she waited for that time.

But someone with an impudent voice called her by name from across the street: 'Hullo, Madam Estelle, come to the pictures!' 'If you like,' said Estelle to her friend.

She did not care for the pictures, and seldom attended to any one well enough to follow the story. But the picture that night startled her to attention: it was about a woman betrayed by her lover, bearing an unwanted child. When Estelle saw it she knew that she was going to have a child, too; she could not hide it from herself any longer.

When they came out from the cinema it was late and dark. The young man pressed her arm against him and drew her down towards the embankment, but she pushed him away and ran; and did not stop till she was in her own street, a quiet orderly street, with a yard or two of garden in front of the houses, and lamps lit, far apart. Estelle stood in the dark between two lamps. At the end of the street was the canal, but she dared not go down there; somewhere in the city, Charlie was, but she did not know where to find him. She was full of misery and despair.

The next day, when she told her

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mother and sister that she was going to have a baby, she wept and trembled; but by the time her father had come home from work, and was to be told too, she was almost serene. Though they were all hurt and horrified and angry, it did not seem to matter so much now that they knew. The responsibility, the blackness and confusion, had fallen upon them: Estelle was apart and light-hearted, standing by the window, hearing them talk far off.

'The dirty scoundrel!' said her father, again and again. 'You'll have to marry him, Estelle.' He shouted this at her, like a threat. 'All right,' said Estelle vaguely, 'I dare say Charlie won't mind.'

But she did not know where he lived. It was when she heard this that her mother, who had not cried at all, fell to weeping. There was an unhappy silence.

'Don't cry, Mother,' said Estelle. 'I dare say I can find him. He's often at the Welsh Harp in the evenings.' She went out quickly.

'The Welsh Harp!' said her father. 'Hanging about all day with louts who aren't our sort!'

'It shouldn't have been,' said her mother.

'And now, the Welsh Harp!' said the father. 'What sort of a husband . . .? Poor little girl!'

Doreen stood up straight and blushed deeply. 'It's the young man I'm sorry for,' she said. 'Yes, whatever he's like. She oughtn't to be allowed to marry him. She's not fit to

marry anyone. But she'll never be any good, never – she's just a good-for-nothing little slattern . . . She is, mother.' As if it had been someone else who had shocked her by forcing this fact upon her, she burst into tears; she was very fond of her sister, and had been obscurely proud of her.

But Estelle walked lightly through the streets and came to the Welsh Harp, where Charlie was standing by the bar. Estelle did not go into the public-house, but stood in the doorway till she caught his eye. He finished his beer and came out to her. 'Hullo, Estelle, coming for a walk?'

Under a plane-tree by the canal Estelle said, 'Charlie, I'm going to have a baby, and Dad is very angry, and he says you will have to marry me.'

Charlie stopped walking and stared at the canal; after a moment he said, 'Well, why not?'

'Why not?' said Estelle, smiling in delight, repeating his phrase like a child proud to have learnt a new word. 'I'm in work,' said Charlie. He gave her a side-long look and put his arm round her. By the time they reached Estelle's home they were looking arch and foolish, and as if they expected to be teased, like other couples just engaged. Estelle's father and mother and sister felt blank, as if a fitness were wanting in the universe.

III

Charlie and Estelle were married before Christmas and went to live the other side of the city, where Charlie

Estelle

worked in a factory. They had a single room in a large house – a fine, high-ceilinged room, because the houses in that part had been built, seventy years before, for gentlemen. Light poured in at the high windows all day, but the air that came in was sour. Inside the house the staircases and passages smelt disagreeable to Estelle; but Charlie did not notice it, and soon Estelle, too, stopped noticing it, and did not need to hold her breath as she went out and in. They bought a bed by instalments, and for the rest the room was furnished with chairs and a table and a chest of drawers from Estelle's home: Charlie's parents had no furniture to spare. They enjoyed themselves choosing bright and cheap flowered cretonne for the windows, and Estelle took pleasure in cutting it up and hemming it, and with two or three precarious stitches fastening the curtain-rings on. She had never made anything before, and so she sighed with contentment as she sat and sewed by the window, in the cold morning sunlight. For a little time she tried to cook, but soon she gave it up and bought tinned food, or persuaded Charlie to take her out to the eating-house at the corner. They were happy as they grew accustomed to each other, and Charlie said to Estelle once or twice, 'I wonder I didn't think of marrying you before.' 'I wonder,' mocked Estelle drowsily, sunning herself in his love.

Dust came in at the windows and by the door and generated in the room all the time. It was nearly a month before Charlie noticed how dirty every-

thing was; then he said, quite cheerfully, 'Hey, Estelle, when did you sweep the floor last?' 'Oh,' said Estelle, 'I'd a headache yesterday.' The next morning, as she left her room, going out to shop, she found a neighbour on the landing. 'Good morning, Mrs. Mallam,' said the woman, 'and what about the stairs? It's your week for cleaning them.' 'Oh, I was going to,' said Estelle, 'but then, I didn't feel up to it. You see, Mrs. Clark, I'm expecting a baby in two months.' Mrs. Clark was kind, and felt pity for the young, delicate-looking creature; she said that she would do the stairs. When Estelle came in again Mrs. Clark knocked at her door and asked if she would like a cup of tea. She brought the tea and sat down, and talked to the girl about the troubles of women; and as she talked she took in the state of the room, the dust on the floor and furniture and grime on the windows, and the bed still unmade, with the covers pulled up roughly, not tucked in, and the dirty bolster retaining the dint of two heads; and before Charlie came home from work, she had turned out the room for Estelle, washing the floor and dusting the furniture, and cleaning the windows inside and out. When Charlie came in Estelle was alone. He stared round the room, and said, 'Looks fine!' and his eyes brightened with a peculiarly tender excitement as they fixed on Estelle. She simply smiled, and without moving, and yet with a clear surrender, submitted to his kiss.

From that time Mrs. Clark often worked for Estelle; and as her confine-

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ment drew nearer, her mother came over as often as she could by tram and bus across the city. The baby, a very small and beautiful girl, was born in April, with hardly any trouble or pain for Estelle.

Mrs. Clark, who was leaving the house, came in early on the third morning to say good-bye. 'What shall you call her?' she asked Charlie, who was up, getting breakfast ready. 'Ask *her*,' he said.

Estelle turned her head on the pillow and thought. 'Felicity is a pretty name,' she said. The fragile look of her face, and the dominance that lying in bed gave her, made it impossible to disagree with her; so the baby was called Felicity. Estelle was enchanted with her; but sometimes, as she was looking at her, she would burst out laughing. At her absurd laughter Charlie might come across the room in his slouching way and shake her, and give her sudden kisses; but at other times he only shrugged his shoulders and said, 'You're daft.'

But though Estelle loved the baby, and was extremely proud of her prettiness, she would not feed her herself. And though at first she loved washing and dressing her, after a time she grew tired of it, and the baby, who was healthy enough, looked little cared for. Summer came early, and Estelle wanted to be out-of-doors all the time. Her mother had bought a pram for her and she took the child out into the nearest park. Always, on hot days, the room was airless and the smell of the house was more stagnant than usual. Estelle

left the room as early as she could, without sweeping or dusting, sometimes without making the bed. She took sandwiches to last her for the day, and milk for Felicity. Walking out into the wide streets and squares of that district which had once been fashionable was like a home-coming to her; and when she had come to the park she would sit on a bench in deep, deeply excited, contentment. Her mind went blind to the memory of the dirty and stuffy room that was her home. She watched the citizens passing by and the foreign birds on the ornamental water, and absorbed the sunlight and the burning early green of the trees. Sometimes other women with prams, and more often soldiers from the barracks near, or other men, stopped and sat on her bench and talked to her. She looked so young that the men found it hard to believe that she was the baby's mother. Sometimes, if she had kept her cotton gloves on, she would pretend that she was her elder sister. The men she got to know joked and flirted with her, and would slide their arms round her as the light failed. One gave her presents of cheap jewellery, that she was too compliant to refuse. He said he was an actor, out of work, but that he had some money saved; and he could speak and look more flatteringly than anyone she had known. One day he said, looking at her searchingly, 'Why shouldn't you leave the kid with the neighbours to-morrow afternoon, and come out alone? We could go to the pictures.' At that, distant and sweet memories stirred in her, and

Estelle

she smiled. 'I will if you like,' she said.

When, in the dark, his hand went out to her knee and began to work up her thigh, she did not understand why she felt unhappy; she had not noticed that she did not like the man. Later he took her to a dance-hall, and there, while they were sitting out, he suggested that she should come away with him. All her thoughts scattered in alarm. She said, 'There's Charlie,' a little vaguely, as if it was by mistake. 'Oh, him!' said her friend. 'Who's he, to appreciate you?' And having an idea that pleased him, he elaborated, 'You're like the perfume of the rose, Estelle. You need someone sensitive, an artist, to understand you . . . take care of you.' She warmed and smiled with pleasure; and an easier way suggested itself to him. 'If you won't come away,' he said, 'you could stay out late some nights . . . with me . . . couldn't you?' She looked so blank that he was angry, and said, 'Didn't you understand? What did you think I meant when I gave you those bracelets and ear-rings? – decent things . . . And what do you suppose your precious Charlie would think it meant, if he knew?'

Estelle lightened suddenly. 'Oh well,' she said, '. . . Plenty of time to think.' She began to hum the tune that the band was playing, and looked sideways at him inviting him to dance, almost mischievously. 'Mona Lisa!' said her friend. She smiled, though she did not know what the words meant, in answer to the grudging flattery

in his voice. They did not speak of his suggestion any more, but when he left her at last, at the corner of her street, he said, 'I shall see you again soon,' in a tone between homage and menace.

Charlie was sullen when she came in. She had told him in the morning that she was going out with a friend, but she had implied that it was a woman friend, and he had not expected her to be so late. But he did not ask her any questions. He was sitting on the bed, staring at the baby, in a sunken dejection. 'Hullo,' he said, hardly turning his head as she came in. She was inclined to cry, but she dared not, so she began to pull off her clothes in silence, letting them drop on the floor. 'I shouldn't leave your things there,' said Charlie, 'they'll get filthy. Nice sort of hole to come home to, isn't it?' She said nothing, but stood naked with her back to him, fighting to control her throat, and her eyelids heavy with tears. He looked at her familiar, beautiful body gloomily, without any pleasure; but when they were in bed, after a while his love for her returned, and he satisfied his passion and fell asleep. Estelle lay awake; there was no place in her mind where her thoughts could come to rest.

IV

In the hot, still night the baby was restless too, and cried. Estelle had kicked her blanket off but still the heat of the bed fretted her skin, and at last she slipped out of bed and stretched herself in the stale air, which was yet

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cool and welcome to her. Without thinking she turned on the light. On the pillow of the bed a little brown insect did not hop, nor fly, nor run, but walked quickly on almost invisible legs, with its long, small head jerking in front of it, and hid itself between the top of the bed and the wall. Estelle, who had a physical fear of insects, stood as still as stone, watching it till it had gone; then she let the shudder caught in her body escape through it. She picked up her crying child and as she did so she saw on the baby's nightgown another little insect, with its head also thrust forward, walking urgently. She gasped and almost dropped the baby, and smashed the insect to the floor. Felicity cried more loudly, and Estelle sat on the bed trembling and in perspiration; her husband did not wake.

The next day, when he had gone to work, Estelle stood in the centre of the room. In one corner of it was the long brush. There were unwashed cups and plates beside the sink and on the table, and the dirty bed-clothes had slipped from the foot of the bed to the floor. There was a blank in Estelle's mind in the place where usually the park shone in sunlight; there seemed nowhere to escape to. Her thoughts fluttered here and there without touching anything, as sensitive of hurt as the wings of bats that feel before contact. Presently she took up Felicity and carried her down to the landlady, who had taken charge of her the day before; the good-natured woman said that she would look after her again. Estelle went out and took a bus that ran to the outskirts of the

city, to a distant suburb that she did not know. It was fresh on the unroofed top of the bus, and in an open piece of ground near the terminus Estelle came upon a fair, with swing-boats and roundabouts and little electric two-seater cars that skidded and bumped into each other. They were all running gaily to jazz music. Estelle liked the electric cars best; out of the few shillings that she had she paid for two rides at sixpence each. After that she made friends, and did not need to pay for herself any more.

In the evening she walked very slowly from the bus-stop home. Charlie was back already, and had brought the baby up from the basement. 'Look here!' he said; he picked up the baby and pulled down the neck of her dress. There was a circlet of red spots round the child's shoulders. 'What is it?' asked Estelle. 'Mrs. Julius says bugs.' The little brown insects, that had walked for cover so quickly, rose to the surface of Estelle's mind. 'Mrs. Julius seemed rattled,' Charlie went on, bitterly and unhappily. 'Said it has always been a clean house before. Now they'll be everywhere, she says, in the wood, in the furniture.'

He looked round the room hopelessly, and picked up a scarf and a petticoat of Estelle's that were lying beside the empty milk bottles. As he opened a drawer to put them in, he saw in it a bracelet set with emerald green and clear glass stones, which the man who called himself an actor had given to Estelle. He took it up, and then a pair of ear-rings to match, and

Estelle

another wide steel bangle, studded with turquoise-coloured stones. 'Hullo, what are these?' said Charlie.

'Doreen gave them to me,' said Estelle, with vague threats in her mind.

'Did she? Yes, did she? How'm I to know? Where've you been to-day, anyway?'

'I somehow felt like a day in the country,' said Estelle.

'Yes, but, my God,' said Charlie, 'how'm I to know?' He was trembling.

'What do you mean? I did, Charlie.'

Charlie's anger died into unhappiness. He said heavily, 'Oh, it must be right, if you say so. But that's the trouble - I don't know. Somehow I never know, what you're doing, or what you're thinking. Why can't you be human, like other people, Estelle?'

'I don't know what you mean. Why should I?' said Estelle. A deep silence hung between them.

At last Charlie said, 'To-morrow's Saturday. You'd better scour the place out in the morning, and I'll bring some flit back with me - they say that's as good as anything - and we'll spray it over everything in the afternoon.' He scratched his shoulder. 'Damn them, they've got me too,' he said; but he laughed, feeling cheerful now, and master of this practical situation. 'There can't be many yet,' he said, 'or we'd have noticed them before.' But Estelle remembered bites on her body that she had thought were mosquito bites, and how there had been something familiar, that might have been remembered from another life,

in the look of the little brown insects. In truth she had half-seen them more than once in the last few weeks, creeping high up near the ceiling or vanishing into cracks in the wall; but she had not let these flecks, with their animal way of moving, stay in her mind.

As if he had heard her thought, Charlie said: 'They say near the ceiling's the place to look for them in the evening.' He scanned the dull white paint above the wallpaper, and in a minute got up on a chair and squashed something. 'Good,' he said grimly, enjoying himself. Estelle looked for them too; her eyes were sharp with apprehension. The walls and ceiling were mottled with dirt, smuts that had stuck, and paint flecking off, and there were flies and spiders' webs in the corners. It was not easy to find the bugs, but easy to imagine them everywhere.

At night, too, Estelle imagined them. She lay awake, with her skin hot and itching. A street lamp made it always less than completely dark in the room; Estelle would raise her head and stare at the pillow, trying to decipher if the motes she seemed to see on it were shadows, or imagination, or simply the speckled texture of darkness; or if they did indeed walk in a panting, purposeful way on short legs.

'You'll have the place turned out?' said Charlie, as he went off to his morning's work. Estelle, half-dressed and heavy-eyed, smiled and said 'Yes.'

She finished dressing and ate her breakfast slowly, though the tea was

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stewed and luke-warm and the bread stale. Then methodically she boiled some water and bathed her baby, for a moment regaining the childish pleasure in this occupation that she had had when it was new; but now the baby was fretful; when the water touched her bites it stung them, and she cried. Estelle's smile faded; the distress that the child's pain made her feel was something like exasperation; she wanted more than anything to run away, out of the sound of her whimpering. But she put cold cream on the bites, not knowing what else to do, and dressed her and laid her on the bed. For some time she stood in the sunlight by the window, looking out. A man passed with a small barrow, selling flowers, roses and the tufted flowers, such as marigolds and asters, that grow in late August. Estelle ran downstairs and bought from him a bunch of flame-coloured marigolds. The man received pleasure from the gaiety of her smile; and she hummed to herself as she arranged the beautiful things in the earthenware water-jug. But immediately she had put the last one in and her hands were empty, a bleak horror fell upon her. There was nothing now between her and the cleaning of the room.

She walked very slowly to where the brush stood and began to sweep the visible parts of the floor. Immediately the air was full of the stinking dust. Her nose and mouth were full of it, and Felicity began to cough and whimper again on the bed. Still she swept a little way, though it seemed

to lie as thickly behind her as before; then she came to the chest of drawers, and laid the broom down, and tried to move the chest. It was not a very heavy piece of furniture, but it seemed heavy to her. She swept the dirt out from under it, and saw something move in a deliberate way, on its own legs, in the pile of dirt. With the heat, and the dust in her throat, and this, she felt a wave of sickness, and dropped the brush and went and lay beside the baby on the bed. When she found that her heavy eyes would keep searching the flecked ceiling, she shut them. The baby was now crying so monotonously that it did not keep her awake; she drowsed, and after a while was deeply asleep. In her sleep she was troubled by a dream of a small brown insect; but the small brown insect was also (with that deep identity which two things can possess in a dream) the man who had been an actor. From this dream she awoke in terror; Felicity had been asleep, but the start of Estelle's waking roused her to cry again. Estelle pulled herself up slowly and stretched herself, and automatically crossed to the mirror to powder her face and pull a comb through her hair. Then she began to wonder about the time, and saw, from the position of the sunlight on the floor, that it must be well past noon and almost time for Charlie to come in. The thought of him coming in and finding the room not cleaned filled her with a panic terror; she was not yet free from the atmosphere of her dream. Her instinct was to escape. She put on her hat and

Estelle

took a coat, and the money that Charlie had handed over to her that morning for the week's housekeeping, and even the jewellery that her admirer had given her; yet she did not consider at all what she was going to do when she had passed the door of the house. She had her hand on the door-knob of the room when she heard Charlie's step on the stair; she backed from the door.

Charlie had the can of flit, an odd-shaped parcel in brown paper, under his arm. He broke eagerly into the room; but when he saw the heap of dust on the floor, the chest moved out from the wall, and how little was done, he stopped short and flushed darkly and angrily. 'Well?' he said; then suddenly getting much more angry, as he realised the situation, he crossed to her and shouted, 'Well, why the hell haven't you done the room?'

'You see,' said Estelle, 'I began, but I felt sick.' She was standing perfectly, warily, still.

'Felt sick!' he cried. 'And that's why you're all dressed to go out, I suppose - going to the doctor, I suppose. Sick? You've never been sick in your life. You're just a lazy, filthy, lying . . . but good God, you can go if you like! I'm about done with you. . . . Oh, and you're taking your jewellery too. Oh, it's that, is it? All right, go on, go where you like, I'll not stop you! Much good you are to me, you damn bloody little bitch!' He was shaking from head to foot.

Estelle ran out of the room; in the silence that set in, Charlie became

aware of the crying of the baby; suddenly he began to cry too, sobbing violently. He was twenty-one years old that day.

V

Estelle walked down the street to the bus-stop and took a bus to the suburb where she had been the day before. She went to the fair-ground. The ragged children, who sat on the ground and the steps of the roundabouts and cadged pennies for rides, were the same; but the faces of the older boys and girls and young men and women were all different, as if she had been away for a generation. She did not feel inclined even for the electric cars. A young man smiled at her from one of the cars; he was a fine, bold creature, with a cap pulled well down over his bright blue eyes, and he was driving with one hand, with scornful, ostentatious ease. Nevertheless, Estelle did not respond to his invitation. She watched for a moment then walked on. Soon she was beyond the shops, and the houses were scarcer; as they gave place, more and more, to open fields, and the air became sweeter, country air, an extraordinary happiness came to Estelle. She walked more slowly, looking from side to side in delight, she had never been so far into the country before. After a while she stopped and leaned on a gate and stood watching the cows in a field. Flies teased her as they did the cows; the slanting sunlight gilded her too. Suddenly she thought - or heard, rather, the

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words in her mind – ‘I must be getting home’ But before she had time to see clearly the hot, grimy room, she had covered it with country green; the beauty of the country was like a sweet sleep to her. When the air began to darken she wrapped herself in her coat and lay down under a hedge, and fell deeply asleep at once. It was lucky for her that the nights were so hot that August and early September.

The next morning she combed her hair, and finding herself very hungry when she began to walk she asked for food at a farm; they gave it to her for nothing. She went on and about mid-day, when it was almost too hot to go farther, she saw across a blue-green turnip-field a horse walking doggedly, and a barge that seemed to be gliding through the field. She went down to it and came upon a canal. It seemed very familiar and natural to her; she was so ignorant that she assumed it was a reach of the same canal that ran near her parents’ home; and it happened that she was right. She sat down on the edge of the tow-path and when another barge passed, going in her direction, away from the city, she waved to the men on it and they took her on board. It was a steam-driven boat, like the barges she had seen in the city, but it went with as slow and smooth a motion through the windless air as if the patient horse had been drawing it. It was deeply laden with flour. The men shared their food with Estelle and the younger of them asked her to stay with them, but the elder rebuked him. There was some quick, half-private

talk, and women’s names were mentioned; Estelle, meanwhile, lay stretched on the convex deck, steeped in sunlight, as if the talk did not concern her at all. In the evening she left them and slept in a field again, close to the canal. For three more days she continued her journey along the canal; sometimes she had lifts, and sometimes walked, and because of the heat she never went far in a day; she slept a good deal in the day too, or sat in the grass by the tow-path looking into the water, or beyond the water to fields set with yellowing trees, and tarnished copses on the hills. She was in a low, detached contentment, like someone dying without pain.

In the afternoon of the third day she came to lock-gates. They were shut, and the water was low in the lock; there were no boats on the canal, and the lock-keeper’s house seemed empty, with all its windows closed. Estelle was tired with the heat; and the melancholy which there was in her happiness (it seemed an unlocated foreboding, but was indeed the secret knowledge that she could not forget for ever) had been growing in her all day. She looked down into the cold, dark, reserved water and lay and leaned over the edge, pressing her sun-scorched arms against the dank slime that coated the sides of the lock. Its coolness made her wish more than ever to be lying in the water of the lock. She stood up and looked round cautiously, then walked down the stone steps in the side to where they ended, a yard above the water-level, and slid in.

Estelle

It was cold indeed and startled her, and when the water got into her throat she struggled as any animal would ; but she could not swim.

The lock-keeper's son saw her go down into the lock, from two fields away. He ran there, shouting, and his mother got up slowly from her bench in the back-garden of the little house, thinking he must be trying to tell her that a barge was waiting to go through the lock. When she got to the front of the house she saw what had happened, but the boy was there as soon as she was, and ran down the steps, slipped into the water, and pulled the girl in. He dragged her up the steps. 'She threw herself in,' he said; he was deeply shaken. He carried Estelle into the house and upstairs, and when she came to consciousness the lock-keeper's wife, Mrs. Pole, had undressed her and put her to bed, the boy was downstairs filling hot-water bottles and making tea. Mrs. Pole said, 'You'll be all right now, dearie,' and went downstairs. 'You'd better take your wet things off too, Ol,' she said, 'and leave me to finish here. She's come to, she'll be all right now.' She added, in a whisper, 'She's wearing a wedding-ring - and yet she doesn't look more than sixteen years old!'

'What do they call you, dear?' she asked later, when Estelle was sitting up in bed drinking tea.

'Mrs. Mallam. My Christian name is Estelle.'

'That's an uncommon name.'

'It is French,' said Estelle. It means "star."

'Does it really?' said Mrs. Pole, keeping this in mind to tell her husband and son. 'But tell me, dear, where's your husband?'

'Oh, he left me,' said Estelle. Her eyes filled with tears. 'There,' said Mrs. Pole, 'It's a shame. But that's what men are. It's what I always say - it's the woman that suffers. That was the way it was with my own daughter: her man left her, and he didn't treat her properly either - got her into trouble, and left her with the baby coming. Oh, it's a sad story. But there, everything is right now. She is happy in service, and we have the baby here, and he's a fine boy, in spite of all.'

'My baby is a girl. She is called Felicity,' said Estelle.

'Eh? You have a baby, too, dear?'

'I mean,' said Estelle, 'she is dead.'

'There, there,' said Mrs. Pole, stroking her shoulder, as she cried. 'You must believe it's for the best. But it's natural to love them, even if they do come uninvited.'

VI

For five weeks Estelle stayed with the lock-keeper's family. It was a little house with only two bedrooms, but the son, Oliver Pole, gave up his room to her and slept on the sofa in the sitting-room. He was a boy of her own age or a little younger; the circumstances of her coming had moved his imagination and pity, and soon he fell in love with her. His mother saw that he was falling in love but it did not worry her at first,

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because she had concluded that the husband who had deserted Estelle, for whose sake she wore a ring, had not been married to her. She was fond of Estelle, and very kind to her, and treated her as an invalid for much longer than was necessary; her husband too, made a pet of the girl and teased her. Estelle bloomed in the country air, in the centre of this happy, affectionate family.

The baby, the love-child of the Poles' daughter, was a sturdy little boy of just over a year old. Estelle played with him in the garden, in the September sun; she threw a ball, and he crawled or tottered after it. She would laugh with pleasure at his babyish clumsiness, and fondle him and push him about; she was almost boisterous with him. Sometimes Oliver, who was out of work except for occasional jobs on the farms round, would join their play.

One day the baby was sitting a yard or two away from Estelle, pulling the heads off a bunch of Michaelmas daisies she had picked for him; after a while he got up and staggered on his feet across to her, where she sat on the ground, and fell on top of her and began to thump her face with his fists. Oliver laughed and said 'He'll make a fine man'; for he wished to say something to Estelle.

At that there rose suddenly in Estelle's mind an image of her own daughter. She saw clearly the tiny prettiness, that was not swamped in infancy, of Felicity's face, the extreme, flawless delicacy of her body and limbs.

She pushed the little boy away and stared with contempt and disgust at his round, blunt face; he was, obviously enough, a plebeian child. 'My baby,' she said, looking straight and resentfully at Oliver, 'was beautiful, like a fairy.' The boy stared at her without a word, not knowing how to express how well he knew that her baby would be beautiful, nor how his heart melted with pity for her loss. Seeing his look, Estelle forgot both babies.

But she cared much less for the little boy after that, and partly for this reason she spent more time with Ol. She knew well how to encourage, without seeming to encourage, his diffidence: yet she did not know that she knew it. He had all the countryside to do his courting in. Estelle was lazing in the garden as usual one morning, the last morning of summer, when he came to ask her to walk with him across the fields. At the same moment his mother, leaning out of her bedroom window to shake out a duster, called down to the girl, 'You'll be getting fat, young woman': there was a touch of real irritation in her voice. Oliver glowered at her. 'If you're not tired,' he said to Estelle, 'come with me and have a look at the Lecky Woods. They've turned a fine colour, they'll make you wish you were an artist. Will you come?'

'Yes, if you like,' said Estelle. They went to the woods together.

These woods were of beeches, turned russet, but there were solitary maples among them, some yellow and some blood-red, which seemed to con-

Estelle

dense the diffused beauty of the beeches. Though they were most beautiful from across a field, Estelle and Oliver went up to them and in. They sat on the trunk of a fallen beech: 'Look,' said Estelle, and showed Ol her hand which she had scratched on a bramble on the outskirts of the wood; it was bleeding a little. Oliver took her hand, and since she did not withdraw it, he put his arm round her. She leaned against him and he kissed her with intense passion; his face was white, and his heart stampeded in his body.

So Estelle submitted; but in a moment her body stiffened as if it had been by a convulsion of its own; she threw him off and dropped her head on the tree-trunk and cried without restraint. She was crying for Charlie, for his sly, laughing, sensual way of approach, his insolent physical confidence; for his bravado and gaiety, his smouldering and flaming temper; the unutterably familiar look of his body, his slouching walk, his clothes and hair and the cadences of his voice.

Oliver was horrified, and did not know what he had done. He was ashamed of his passion; he tried humbly and brokenly to comfort her. At last she stopped crying and arranged her hair, and they went home miserably together. It was easy to see that something was wrong, and Mrs. Pole looked suspiciously at them both but more especially at Estelle.

The next morning Estelle's heart was a little lighter; the dissatisfaction that she still felt, she thought, was because the weather had broken. She

sat by the kitchen fire instead of in the garden, for it was raining and chilly. 'Come along,' said Mrs. Pole. 'You may as well make yourself useful for once;' she set Estelle to scrape potatoes. Estelle did it unwillingly and badly; after a moment Mrs. Pole looked up from her work and saw that she was standing idle. 'Well, what's wrong now?' asked the woman, with a sharpness that she was not herself prepared for in her voice. 'I hurt my hand on a bramble yesterday. The water stings it,' said Estelle.

From that time Oliver avoided Estelle, and Mrs. Pole was losing patience with her; she had begun to be sorry that she had adopted the young woman. On the third morning of rain she came down from cleaning her bedroom and said to Estelle with unconcealed anger, 'Look here, Miss, you might at least keep your own room clean and tidy. It's a filthy pig-sty, it doesn't look like decent people lived here at all – and after Ol's turned himself out for you, too.' She took a long brush and a pan and duster, and put them into Estelle's hands. 'You'd better go and turn it out at once,' she said, 'or I'll be saying something I'm sorry for.'

Estelle went upstairs with the brush and pan and duster. She pulled up the covers of the bed and set herself to sweep the floor with the long brush. She had left it unswept long enough for a good deal of dust to have settled, even in that country place; so in a moment the hateful smell of dust was in her nostrils again. She hated it so much,

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both for itself and because it woke in her memories of an unbearable confusion, that she stopped sweeping at once and leaned on her brush, looking furtively round the room. Her thoughts beat about for some way of escape, but there was none: the window was too high to jump from, and she dared not go downstairs with her work not done; she saw that she was cornered.

The broom dropped from her hand and she sat down on the bed and thought. She thought, 'I will go home'; and she let herself remember, one by one, her quarrel with her husband, the dirt and the bugs, and the man who said he had been an actor, with his manner that insinuated threats she did not understand; but none of these memories, though they appalled her, could take away altogether the feeling of peace and relief that it gave her to think, 'I will go home.' More terrible than any of them, because it was nearer, was the knowledge that she would have to explain her going to the lock-keeper's family. Her heart turned cold when she thought of telling Mrs. Pole, because she had seen in the last few days how sharp-tongued the mild woman could be. But she put on her hat and coat, and took her bag; she left behind, after a moment of thought, the few clothes that Mrs. Pole had bought for her in the weeks she had been with them; and she made herself open the door, and walked downstairs, dragging the brush behind her.

The Poles were all in the kitchen; they looked surprised when they saw

her dressed to go out. 'Mrs. Pole,' she said, 'I've been thinking; and I have to go back.'

'Go back where?' said Mrs. Pole.

'Home. To my husband.'

'Husband? What husband? You said you hadn't got a husband.'

'Well,' said Estelle, 'but he's come back. And I don't know how they'll be getting on without me.'

'What d'you mean, they?' said Mrs. Pole.

'Him and my baby,' said Estelle, forgetting.

'Here, stop a moment,' said the lock-keeper, rousing himself. 'Let's get this straight. Your baby's dead. Or have you got another?'

At that Oliver burst out laughing, then pulled himself out of his chair and went from the room. Before he had quite passed the door his laughter had turned to hysterical sobbing, but no one noticed.

'Oh-ho,' said Mr. Pole, 'you've been having us on.'

'Having us on!' cried his wife. 'If you ask me she's been lying and cheating like a common beggar. Yes, coming to us with her pretty stories and her pretty face and her lah-di-dah, sweet-do-nothing manners, and sponging on us for nothing, eating us out of house and home!'

Estelle took her bracelets and earrings out of her bag. 'You can have these,' she said. She had no idea how little their value was.

'I don't want your trash, thank you,' said Mrs. Pole. 'How do I know where you picked it up? Oh, it's not

Estelle

that I grudge the food – it's all that deceit I can't stand. Husband ! You may have twenty husbands, for all I know. I shouldn't be surprised at all Yes, but what about Ol?' she cried, with such ferocity that Estelle caught her breath. 'Ol's a good boy – What have you been doing to him, you drab? Oh, I see it perfectly well now, the nasty piece of goods you are! . . .'

She talked for ten minutes, and Estelle stood quite still, controlling her trembling; only her eyes moved here and there, planning escape. The old man, too, seemed stunned by his wife's anger, and did not try to interrupt her

But at last, at the crest of her speech, the woman stopped short, as if she had suddenly heard her furious words and they had sounded, even to her herself, in that silence, like the monotonous rattling of stones in a tin. She looked at Estelle blankly. 'Well,' she said, 'you'd better be going.' • Estelle put down her bracelets and ear-rings on the table and went out.

It was still raining, a fine, dull rain Estelle looked up and down the canal; there were no barges in sight. She turned up the collar of her summer coat and began to walk, as soberly as the barge-horses walk, along the tow-path, towards the city.

Primavera's Votaress

(Christina Rossetti)

by Arthur S. Cripps

SHE sang as blackbird best in bleakest hours:
She kept chill vigils among April-flow'rs:
Her hope more lowly (and more lovely) shone
Than green grass will ere bitter March be gone:
Her faith wore purple – such rose-purple gay
As hills wear – deep'ning with the end of day:
Her joy wore nought but white in any year –
That virgin-white which blackthorn winters wear.
Like Easter's dancing sun, like sap that stirs,
Like lamb that follows LAMB, leap'd heart of hers.

Attainment

by Richard Gwent

SHE lean'd across the table, and she said,
 'Now we have reacht the tow'r,
This wine is bitter, and this broken bread
 Is sour.' . . .

They had adventured far and very far
 Across the long, low plains;
No light above them but a single star,
 No sound but the flat rain's.

There was no road; along the empty grass
 They walkt as driven by an alien pow'r:
Not in them was the only love there was:
 And then they reacht the Tow'r.

Then, the stairs climb'd, they sat at that strange feast
 On the spread table with the candles lit,
The wine-flagon, the bread not made with yeast . . .
 They were afraid of it.

And, when he had pour'd the wine, and broke the bread,
 Using those ancient words of ancient pow'r -
'This broken bread is bitter, love,' she said,
 'This wine is sour.'

Two Vaults

by Ernst Toller

EL ESCORIAL: THE VAULT OF KINGS

BAEDEKER tells us that during the siege of St. Quentin, Philip II. promised the holy monk Laurentin that he would build him a monastery because the Spanish artillery had shot his church to pieces. Philip did in fact begin to carry out his promise, but when the edifice was half completed he changed his mind, and had it finished as a palace instead.

The bare, savage outline of El Escorial involuntarily calls to mind the grimness of artillery barracks. Stark and grey it stands, a monster of stone, with no surrounding park, no tree or bush to lighten the bleakness of the courtyard. The air in the corridors and on the staircases strikes cold and harsh, nor do the hoarded treasures impart anything of warmth or of life to the great rooms.

Only a man whose soul was bitter with hatred of the world could have chosen this stronghold for his home. It was here that Philip II., the sickly, hypocritical ruler of a mighty kingdom, hid himself. His bedroom is like a monastic cell. A low, narrow door leads from it to an adjoining chapel, where, while he languished on a sick-

bed, monks intoned prayers for the dying. This chapel is a superb creation of marble, chill as death itself; in spite of its vastness it is oppressive.

In the study, beside the chair that was constructed so that Philip's afflicted leg could be supported in comfort, stands a globe. On this globe Philip would follow the vicissitudes of his proud Armada and Elizabeth's English Fleet, until, wearying of this occupation, he would ask for one of the cases of giant butterflies that lined the walls to be placed in his hands.

The cellars underneath the palace are the family vault; a maze of white marble rooms. Here lie the mummies of children who died in early youth, the bodies of Don Carlos and Elizabeth, the sarcophagi of the three wives of Ferdinand VII., and in an adjoining room those of the Princes and Princesses.

Monuments without greatness, without beauty.

In the octagonal Pantheon de los Reyes, the gilded, grey marble coffins of Spanish Kings are stacked four deep against the walls; chemically preserved relics of a vast power and a vast decay.

The guide indicates a coffin. 'It's still empty,' he says.

Ernst Töller

'Waiting for whom?'

'For Alphonso XIII.'

He tells us how the King, before he left Spain, drove to El Escorial to bid farewell to the coffins of his ancestors, and to that which was destined for his own body, and in which it will never rest.

JEREZ: THE BRANDY VAULT

From 1914 to 1918 the nations of Europe fought for democracy and peace. With heavy hearts the generals unsheathed their swords for the last time, vowing thereafter to let them rust in eternity. All that was, of course, metaphorically speaking. No one has ever seen a general with a drawn sword anywhere except on parade. But since we were at that time living peacefully it was necessary to make a war so that after it we might again have peace.

The generals were the real losers of the war. With eyes open and conscious heroism they deliberately went out to destroy that by which they lived. Of course they did not admit it in so many words, but we give them credit for it.

The gainers were, among others, the French brandy manufacturers. For even while the church bells were ringing in the peace which was to be established by the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, and Trianon, an order went out to all German cognac manufacturers that from then on their product was to be known by the trade name of 'Weinbrand.'

We see from this that a wise peace reduces competition and ensures the fair distribution of profits.

Spain did not fight in the cause of eternal peace, therefore she was allowed to call her brandy, brandy. The warmth of the Andalusian sun runs in it, it has the perfume of the rich brown earth of El Majuelo. It is distilled in Jerez de la Frontera, and the English drink it in its undistilled form as sherry.

Jerez owes its fame to Messrs. Pedro Domeq, Gonzales, Byass & Co. -- not, oddly enough, to the late dictator, Primo de Rivera, whose birthplace it was, and whose statue still stands there, commemorating the fact that he was a good-hearted man who gave peace and bread to the land. The peace refers no doubt to that which the dead soldiers lying in Morocco know, and the bread is of the kind which, according to Goethe, is eaten with tears.

The walls of Messrs. Gonzales, Byass & Co.'s reception rooms are adorned with framed letters: -- King George sends an order for a bottle of 1893 sherry; King Alphonso XIII. conveys his thanks for the last consignment of *Insuperable*; from another letter we learn that the late Czar of Russia was fond of a glass of Solera . . . The cares of crowned heads are not our cares, but their pleasures are sometimes our own.

It is not Señor Gonzales who leads us through the vast bodegas. He, poor gentleman, has gone the way of all mortals, and an English company has bought up his business. A very bored-looking guide shows us the cellars.

Two Vaults

permits us to taste the commoner wines and admire the casks that contain the rarer vintages.

Now I know where the great ones of the earth leave their visiting cards, whom they consider as their equals, and where they bestow their autographs. These casks are encrusted with the royal arms of King, Kaiser, Grand Duke, Infante, and Infanta, and the chalk-scrawled signatures of their owners. At Christmas small barrels are sent out gratis and carriage paid to all the Courts of Europe, and in return the firm of Gonzales, Byass & Co. is allowed to use the names of royal patrons on its labels. It has been left to mere film stars to advertise the excellences of tooth-paste and mouth wash.

In a voice that clicks its heels at every comma, our guide describes the festive occasions of the christenings of Jerez, Solera, Monzanilla, Amontillado, Tres cepas, Soberano, and Insuperable.

'His Majesty's sainted father used to prefer this one – that cask there was dedicated to the Infanta Isabella on her birthday.

'These casks, gentlemen, are the "Jesus and the Twelve Apostles," this is "Methuselah," that "Soberano," the king of cognacs, and over there in the corner, "Insuperable," the great grandfather of all brandies which Napoleon himself drank before he lost the battle of Ballen.'

What is it this mausoleum of wine barrels reminds me of so strongly? Ah yes, I have it! It is modelled on the same plan as the vault in the El Escorial Palace, where the relics of kings are also preserved and exhibited to the curious in return for a small gratuity.

'And now, gentlemen, we are coming to the Concha, the cooperage. This room was honoured only two years ago by the visit of the Royal Family, who graciously partook of the local breakfast. The Infantes and Infantas sat at common wooden tables, and their Majesties did the same. You may read the record of this occasion inscribed on the great cask over there, King Alphonso signed it with his own hand.'

I had had my fill of Kings and their servitors. I went out to find some workmen to talk to. They told me that before the Revolution they were obliged to work for a daily wage of three pesetas, that their jobs were being increasingly taken by women because women work for half that wage, and that the Republican purveyors to Royalty have taught them what God meant when He put the curse of work upon man.

As we said good-bye, our guide returned to earth and handed us each a catalogue in which we would find all the wines listed, and might note that on orders of ten or more bottles freight and packing was paid by the firm.

A Note on Corneille

by Martin Armstrong

As I laid down, this evening, a volume of Corneille, I fell to marvelling once again at the gulf that separates the French and the English genius. We live, we and the French, within sight of each other. The insignificant strip of water that divides us has been proved, though not by me, to be swimmable; yet the French and the English genius, though they have their points of contact in their lower levels, are separated at their summits by a whole world.

We English do not take kindly to the classical, least of all in literature. Our greatest poetical achievement, blank verse, is bound by no rules but that its lines shall be implicitly, if not actually, decasyllabic. The phrases that compose it may begin and end anywhere in the line and run over from line to line without pause or punctuation. Its success depends not on traditional rules but on the personal discretion of the poet by which he controls, with an instinctive tact not to be analysed, the rhythm not merely of the individual line, but of the great periods of which the form consists. It is the same with the drama, the Shakespearean drama, into which this stream of molten metal is poured. These

tragedies are vast, crowded, Gothic structures (Gothic in the midst of the Renaissance), prodigal, violent, elaborately voluble, moving to their tragic destination in a disorderly rout made up of persons of every class from king to clown, impelled by every mood from agony to farce, juggling with time and place with a total disregard of the sacred Unities, packing all Rome, all England, a continent, two continents, into the four walls of the Globe Theatre, and whole weeks, whole months into the three hours of the play. In speaking of such plays, in speaking even of *Hamlet*, we do not in the first place use the words 'brain' and 'intellect.' The flashes of profound human wisdom that burst from them, like sudden flames through rolling smoke, seem to proceed not at all from the orderly and piercing intelligence of the philosophic observer expressing itself with consummate art, but from discoveries made in a moment of passion. The French have often parodied the Shakespearean drama and the results are not only extremely amusing but extremely enlightening. We see ourselves for a moment as certain others see us. But we do not return the compliment. So far as I know there

A Note on Corneille

are no English parodies of Corneille or Racine, and for the simple reason that we lack the precision of intellect that such parodies require. It is true that we are heavily handicapped, for it is much easier to parody emotion and action than intellect, and so to parody Shakespeare than Corneille and Racine. No, we do not parody them, nor do we read them. For the vast majority of us they are an 'acquired taste'; a taste, moreover, which we do not acquire. At various stages of existence, stages separated by a good many years, I conscientiously attempted Racine, and failed not only to digest him, but even to swallow him. But some years ago I tried again and a surprising thing occurred, something that I should find it laborious, perhaps impossible, to account for. For, this time, I not only managed to get him down as, by hook or by crook, one gets down Castor Oil; I drank him with the same enthralled and reverent delight with which I drank, on a recent unforgettable occasion, *L'Enfant Jésus* 1906. Obviously something of which I was unconscious, some profound constitutional change, had come over me since the previous attempt, and now I consumed him wholesale – the rhymed couplet, the *cæsura*, the three unities and all – with an ecstatic greed; and, not content with that, I pressed him on my shuddering friends as a generous Chinaman might press rotten eggs on an appalled visitor from the West.

But it was Corneille, not Racine, who provoked these present reflections, and if you can stomach Racine,

Corneille is mere child'splay, a matter of half a dozen oysters after the grim initiation into Snails. Indeed, years and years ago I read and much admired a play by Corneille, though it is significant that I have totally forgotten which one it was and that I did not return to him for over a decade. What is it, then, in the Classical French Drama that so turns the English stomach? You have only to compare that drama with the Shakespearean. It is everything that the Shakespearean is not. Instead of a mass of scratches and cross-hatchings and blazing chiaroscuro, it is a pure line drawing like those amazing drawings of Picasso's. Instead of a complexity evolving from a primitive and barbaric simplicity, it is simplicity distilled from intellectual complexity. History or myth, before it appears on the French stage, is reduced to a single vital, dramatic moment, and a moment, too, which develops in a period not much exceeding that space of time for which the performance actually occupies the stage. The spectators are not called upon to ignore patent fact and exercise imagination, to assume that a week, a month, a year, passes on the stage while they sit for an hour or two in the auditorium; to pretend that the stage, which is obviously a large, stationary room, is now a camp near Forres, now a blasted heath, now a castle at Inverness, now 'a park with a road leading to the palace,' now various scenes indoors and out-of-doors in Dunsinane. In short, the three unities are as closely as possible observed. And if the drama is bound by sacred rules, so,

Martin Armstrong

too, is the medium in which it is expressed. In place of the flowing lava of English blank verse there is the rhymed couplet with a pause at the end of it. And not only that. Each line must be divided, at peril of a riot in the theatre, by the *cæsura*. Yes, absolutely! For when Victor Hugo violated the *cæsura*, the audience rose in outraged expostulation – a fact that, to an Englishman, is exquisitely comical.

The fact itself and its effect on the Englishman define, as sharply as any critical disquisition, the abysmal difference between the French and English character. English blank verse: the French rhymed couplet! In other terms, the painting of Constable and the Byzantine mosaic. Like a Chinese lady, the classic French drama is a creature of rules, regulations and ceremonies: its feet are so constricted that it is capable of only a single, formal gait. But the result of this constriction is a magnificent concentration, dramatic, emotional and syntactical. As I look back on the two plays of Corneille which I have just laid down – *Le Cid* and *Horace*, the first in which he reaches his full stature – I could almost believe that they are as inevitably the result of their conditions as an oak tree is the result of laying an acorn in the earth. The dramatic point and the emotional stress of each is presented by the same device, namely the dilemma. In *Le Cid* Rodrigue is the accepted suitor of Chimène. Chimène's father insults the aged father of Rodrigue: it is Rodrigue's bounden duty to avenge the dishonour. He is caught in the

dilemma between his love and his honour. Honour prevails: he challenges Chimène's father to a duel and kills him. Thereupon Chimène is caught in a similar dilemma. Her lover is also her father's murderer. The situation is not merely dramatic, it is epigrammatic, and it is in the intellectual concentration of the epigram that the heart-rending situation develops: Chimène cries,

La moitié de ma vie a mis l'autre au
tombeau,
Par où sera jamais ma douleur
apaisée,
Si je ne puis hair la main qui l'a
causée?
Et que dois-je espérer qu'un tour-
ment éternel,
Si je poursuis un crime, aimant le
criminel?

Rodrigue m'est bien cher, son intérêt
m'afflige;
Mon cœur prend son parti: mais,
contre leur effort,
Je sais que je suis fille, et que mon
père est mort.

Consider what happens when an English romantic tries to do this kind of thing:

His honour rooted in dishonour stood
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely
true.

That is little more than a verbal quip, as devoid of emotional content as an algebraic equation. But in Corneille the algebra flowers into pure emotion; and so, in epigram after epigram Chimène and Rodrigue lament

A Note on Corneille

their appalling dilemma. How different an expression of grief from the magnificent outpourings of Shakespearean passion. This one might call an intellectual grief, for its expression, so irresistibly real and so exquisitely simple, has been fashioned in the cold fires of the intellect. Hardly anywhere in Shakespeare will you find that particular sort of piercing simplicity voiced in the first and last lines I have quoted.

So, crystallizing stage by stage into these astonishing epigrams, the play moves to its solution. And though we may feel that towards the end the young Corneille (he was only thirty when he wrote *Le Cid*) has become fascinated by his own skill and so unduly delays the *dénouement* by emphasizing the dilemma until it almost appears a clever trick, almost overtaxes our emotional receptivity, yet we lay down the book breathless with admiration of this miracle of intellectual passion. The mind that produced it must have had a clarity, an orderliness, and a delicacy of feeling unknown on this side of the Channel.

It is the cream of civilization. And like cream, we English are mistakenly inclined to believe it is superficial, for this smoothness of thought and manner draws the attention to the surface. We must not forget, when we read Corneille and more especially Racine, the warning of Landor, a warning particularly valuable for the romantic English: 'Clear writers, like fountains, do not seem as deep as they are: the turbid look most profound.' For there are profundities beneath these smooth surfaces, even though the turbid Shakespeare not only looks but ultimately proves to be profounder still. 'Le cœur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît pas,' says Pascal. Shakespeare's flashes of wisdom are not the results of philosophy and logical thought. They are discoveries made by the white light of passion, a passion which has discovered worlds which the marvellous science of the two Frenchmen never reaches. But the fact that so many of us fail to appreciate them, fail to perceive how magnificently far they do reach, is merely a sign of our unfortunate limitations.

*Seeking the Bubble Reputation
Even in the Critic's Mouth . . .*

The Bubble

by Gerald Bullett

CANTO THE FIRST

CHARM, the professors tell us, is a word
Related to the singing of the bird:
And if with lyric charm we interfuse
Imperial ease, Guy Chevenix ensues:
The golden Guy, whose adventitious glory
Is the high theme of my instructive story.

Give wings, O Muse, to my pedestrian pen
While I relate that he, like other men,
Ere he could boast the menace of a beard
Or learn to grieve that he was gently reared,
Abandoning the study and the sword
Offered his budding manhood to the Lord
Lord Kitchener, who took a proper pride
In teaching youth the joys of homicide.

War was the school of character, they said.
The gentle moralist with snow-white head,
The Female patriot, the mitred sage,
And many men past military age,
All said that warfare, God's scholastic whim,
Was just the thing to make a man of him.
He liked the notion and approved the plan:
It would be splendid to be made a man.
But when his comrades, having been perfected
In this same school of character, elected
To die in haste and decompose at leisure,
The spectacle afforded him no pleasure:
For mortuary studies – thus and thus –
Had not been mentioned in the syllabus.
And since the scheme of education had
This unsuspected blemish, he was glad
To rest his buttocks, after safe returning,
On that more comfortable seat of learning,
The University where, with his betters,
He undertook to study English letters.

The Bubble

Whether he was a clerk of Oxenford
Or Cantabrig, O Muse, no rich reward
Shall tempt me to reveal, lest thou and I
Be baked together in a lawyer's pie,
Enough that having taken there his ease
In preference to taking his degrees,
Admired of many, idol of the few
Who came to question and remained to woo,
He duly doffed the academic gown
And came to London, where he settled down
In quasi-legal chambers in the heart of town.

So there we find him. Round his graceful head,
Who is so variously talented,
Hover the nine infatuated Muses,
Obsequious to see which one he chooses.
And shall he paint, or shall he learn to fly?
Or shall he elegantly versify?
Or shall he cultivate a golden voice
And make a million listeners rejoice
In fat-stock prices, a suburban don,
And have his morals minded by Sir John,
And, lauded by the worldling and his wife,
Wear the white feather of a blameless life?
Or shall he enter England's parliament
And learn to hedge, and labour to prevent,
And fish for faith and favour with a hook
Baited with counsels from a copybook?
Or shall he be some other kind of crook:
A breezy bishop skilful to betray
The Master in whose name he draws his pay,
Knowing which side his bread is buttered on,
And how to get some more, when that is gone,
By justifying poverty and war
And drawing handsome dividends therefor,
To empty bellies preaching future bliss,
And crucifying Jesus with a kiss
(A smoother deal than Judas's, indeed,
Christ being dead, and bishops highly fee'd)?

Or shall he play an honest actor's part
And dedicate himself to Laughton's art?
Or pluck the laurels from Stravinsky's brow?
Or live the simple life and keep a cow?
Or write a book? Or deal in shares and stocks?
Or chivvy people in the witness-box,
Circumlocution making long his brief,
And set himself a thief to catch a thief?

Gerald Bullett

These triumphs all are his, you understand,
His for the stretching of a careless hand.
And, with careers so varied at his call
(Since Conscience can make Cowards of us all),
Many or all of these he may embrace,
Winning the world with manifolded grace,
If, added to his versatility,
He have ambition, purpose, industry:
Inestimable virtues, it is said:
So what says Clio on this latter head?

Rising for lunch, Guy fills his afternoons
With song and dance and syncopated tunes.
At eve the haunts of pleasure he will range,
To find in dance and song a pleasant change.
By wooing many a maid and marrying none
He's proved himself more wise than Solomon:
By listening to talk, and laughing at it,
He's won the reputation of a wit.
That with this numerous endowment he's
Destined for glory, everyone agrees:
But none can lend the glory they proclaim
A local habitation and a name,
Except the publisher Tom Merridew,
Who knows, and knows he knows, a thing or two.

Boldly abandoning the present tense,
Now let me cast away all coy pretence
And brace myself, unravelling my plot,
Unblushingly to tell you what is what.
Among the many talents that he had,
Guy Chevenix, that gay, that golden lad,
Was one he valued far beyond the rest:
He could do nothing better than the best.
He could do nothing: nothing was his forte,
Nothing his art, his passion, and his sport,
Nothing the poem that his days spelled out,
Nothing whatever to write home about.
Confronted by the glittering array
Of high alternatives, he turned away,
And, careless how they sighed or prophesied,
Took *dolce far niente* for his bride.

So Guy, from crack of dawn till daylight waned,
And often late into the night, abstained
From plastic art and graphic, prose and verse,
And from impersonating – what is worse –

The Bubble

The Prince of Denmark. Between lunch and tea
He broked no shares, composed no symphony.
And after tea, till supper should ensue,
Our hero banked not, neither did he brew.
And, supper past, beneath a darkening sky,
Who split the atom? It was never Guy.
Financiers may cry from street to street:
Guy will not help them with their balance-sheet.
Pork-butchers may grow spectre-thin and pale
Pleading for guidance: it shall not avail.
Science, for want of him, may come to grief,
And Letters languish, lacking his relief,
And bishops beg, and barbers bid him stay:
He moves unmoved upon his wayward way,
Nothing, and nothing else, the light of all his day.

CANTO THE SECOND

Ex nihilo nihil fit, you'll say. But we've
A more heroic hero up our sleeve.
Enter Tom Merridew: a jolly creature,
Portly of frame and rubicund of feature.
Cunning and candid, slippery and staunch,
Fond of his friends, his pleasures, and his paunch.
Enter Tom Merridew: and just in time
To spare your patience and restore the rhyme.
'You cannot spend your life,' protested Tom,
'In doing nothing with superb aplomb.
Your King and Country need you, I insist,
To write a novel for my *Summer List*.'

'A novel?' echoed Guy 'Whatever for?
How do you like this brandy? Have some more.
I find these chambers pretty snug, don't you?
You ought to come more often, Merridew.
My window overlooks a garden-court
Where nightingales dream, and doves resort,
And swallows, whom more southern skies anoint,
Weave to my eyes a witching counterpoint,
And golden birds, re-gilded by the day,
Flash in the silver of the fountain-spray.
There, after sunset, rising with the dew,
Sweet Ariel, with all her elvish crew,
Will foot it featly on the shaven lawn,
Nor vanish till the cockcrow of the dawn.

Gerald Bullett

Primrose and daffodil and lily bright,
Each in her season brings a new delight:
And when the green and golden days are gone,
All summer's left for me to ponder on.
Here in the heart of the metropolis,
With London roaring round me, I've the bliss
Of silence, and delicious solitude,
And drinks, cigars, and books, for every mood.
My man Nob Cornet, who's a perfect peach,
Puts everything I want within my reach,
And keeps himself severely out of sight,
As out of mind ~'

'The silent service'

'Quite.

Though thrones may rock and clamour fill the sky,
It does not trouble *me*,' continued Guy.
'Thundering on their courses, to and fro,
Not fifty yards away, the buses go,
And shop-assistants sweat, and pavements swarm
With females more or less in human form,
Common commodities are bought and sold,
The air grows raucous as the day grows old,
And strong men yell, and taxis ply for hire:
While I, sequestered, ponder and admire
The silver silence humming like a top,
Within a stone's throw of the traffic-cop.
Lend me a pin, old man, and you shall hear it drop.'

'Is this the novel that I asked you for?'
Said Merridew. Guy answered: 'What a bore!'
But Merridew rejoined, with dulcet voice:
'England expects: you have no other choice.
We know you've got it in you, my dear boy,
To write a masterpiece. So why so coy?
And, with Minoover aiding, I'm the chap,
I, Merridew, to put you on the map.'
To which Guy answered, with admiring stare:
'Minoover! Why, his work is everywhere!'

'Five daily papers and three weeklies,' said
Merridew, nodding a sagacious head.
'Yes, every book that's sent him to peruse
Provides material for eight reviews.
Eight fives are forty. Forty pounds a week
And not a dime deducted for his cheek.
Moreover, never mind the why or whence,
By a most laughable coincidence,

The Bubble

Minoover reads for Thomas Merridew,
Reads and reports and recommends the few
Undoubted masterpieces that occur
In the announcements of that publisher.
And that,' said Thomas, unexpectedly,
'That makes it rather difficult, you see.'
He smiled engagingly at Guy, and Guy,
Prompt to his cue, all meekly answered: 'Why?'

'It's rather, rather subtle,' said his friend.
'Minoover is reluctant to offend
His wincing conscience with a seeming sin
Which mirth or malice might detect him in.
He is the soul of honour, you'll confess,
In that he hesitates to use the press
For boosting books he's recommended me
In course of earning his retaining fee:
Books upon which, for every copy sold,
He takes a small commission, be it told.
The notion hurts him, but I'm bound to say
He fights reluctance, and wins the day.
O brave Minoover! He's the sort of man
Who'll always do a kindness when he can,
To English Literature, to me, to you:
Yes, even though it pay him so to do.
I'll tell him of your book.'

'What book?' asked Guy.

'The novel that you'll write me.'

'No, not I.'

'Listen, this novel —'

'But there isn't one!'

'Will get the whole of Bloomsbury on the run.
Set all provincial England by the ears —'

'And shock,' said Guy, 'the suburbs. Hearty cheers!

Guy Chevenix must beg to be excused.

Please change the subject. We are not amused.'

Tom Merridew forgave him with a smile
And turned to other matters for a while,
Seeking, with commerce, art, and politics,
To soothe the butterfly he would transfix.
He told a tale of bears that rush to cover
And bulls that will be bulls the whole world over
He cracked a joke or two about Cezanne,
And Picasso provided wholesome fun:
He execrated Tweedledum's behaviour,
And Tweedledee he called the country's saviour:
And, when his listener's demeanour failed

Gerald Bullett

To register elysium, he retailed
The talk of men at literary teas,
And murmur of innumerable shes:
How Bill Belhazard's ballet was a flop,
And Lady Ludo meant to let him drop:
How Leonard Lank, the old Etonian,
Who was a fascist, and a flogging-fan,
And every other inch a gentleman,
Had blown his brains out on his bedroom floor,
And still behaved exactly as before:
How So-and-So had married Such-and-Such,
And how the celebrated Doctor Crutch
Had started a solarium in town
Where anyone could go and be done brown.

With such Arcadian discourse he essayed
To soothe our Guy and make him unafraid:
And when he saw the twitching nerves relax
He softly murmured: 'Captain Stallyax,
Lord Alfred Bodger, Pim the Pekinese,
Evadne Gossamer and Walter Wheeze,
Aunt Nettlebed, a winsome girl called Kate,
The waitress, Gertie Nunn, who wouldn't wait,
The cleverest cockatoo you ever saw
(So whimsically christened Bernard Shaw),
Supers by Dickens, who will never know,
Morality by Mill and Martineau,
Urban sophistication, rural fun –
Why, bless my soul, the thing's as good as done!
A gem, a joy, a nest of singing birds,
In eighty thousand deftly chosen words.'

Thus Thomas Merridew. With glazing eye
Guy stared at him, but offered no reply.
And Merridew took up the tale again:
'I hope, dear boy, I make my meaning plain.
To-morrow I prepare my *Summer List*,
A pamphlet setting forth the vital gist
– With eulogies more dubitably vital –
Of autumn publications. Hence the title.
So you and I, before we say good-night,
A circumstantial paragraph must write
Anent the novel you've described to me,
Which we will call *As Good Fish in the Sea*,
Or *Had Much Argument*, or simply *Jetsam*:
An enigmatic title always gets 'em.'

The Bubble

'You weary me,' says Guy. 'To hell with you!'
'But first my paragraph,' cries Merridew –
'You'd make a good insurance-tout,' says Guy –
'Listen!' says Thomas with a plaintive sigh . . .

But, Muse, enough! 'Twere tedious to rehearse
That royal argument in homespun verse.
Enough that Guy, unable to resist
So strong persuasion, promised, ere he wist,
To let his name adorn the Merridevian list.

CANTO THE THIRD

The *Summer List* of Thomas Merridew
Was promptly issued to the public view,
And high expectancy began to stir
In hearts susceptible to literature.
The paragraph concerning Chevenix,
So typical of Thomas and his tricks,
Was calculated cleverly to whet
The appetites of Chevenix's set.
'At last!' they cried. 'It's certain to be good!
We knew that you could do it if you would!
But not a word to us about it! – Why?
Secretive darling! What a naughty Guy!'
And thus with dulcet praise and cold reproof,
Their manly voices menacing the roof,
To Guy's abode these great rough fellows come.
Eager to greet the glad millennium.
'Tell us the story, there's an angel-pet!'
Guy growls for answer: 'Tisn't started yet.'
Whereat they voice their disbelief and cry
'Oh what a tarradiddle, dearest Guy!'
And he: 'Forgive me if I speak my mind,
For I am cruel only to be kind.
The sight of Hector in his silken hose,
And proud Apollo powdering his nose,
And Samsons no Delilah would have sheared,
And Adolescence in a golden beard,
Delights me not. Therefore – and make it quick! –
Pray you, begone. I'm going to be sick.'
It was his high endeavour to be rude,
So to preserve his sacred solitude,
But, though he did his damndest to offend,
Poor Guy! – he could not lose a single friend:

Gerald Bullett

For all assured him, when they went away,
They'd come and visit him another day.
'Good Nob,' quoth he (for Nob was Cornet's name),
'Your taste hereafter will be much to blame
If, having seen that gang, you re-admit the same.'

Remembered April, like a morning tune,
Mellowed the buds of May, the rose of June,
And June grew big with promise of July,
And royal August waited in the sky.
And every day poor Guy would take a look
At Merridew's description of his book,
And, proud to know his literary status,
Await the whim of the divine afflatus
He gazed and gazed, and still the wonder grew
That one small blurb could carry all he knew
Of Captain Stallyax, Pim the Pekinese,
Evadne Gossamer and Walter Wheeze,
And Kate, and Gert, and Auntie Nettlebed,
And all the rest, who, the description said,
Recalled the glory of a golden time
When English fiction flourished in her prime.
And, willing though he was, you understand,
To give poor literature a helping hand
Out of the fix that Wells had got her in,
He couldn't for the life of him begin.
So, with poised pen, this wonder of the age
Sat staring at his unpolluted page,
Shocked to discover, with a panic throb,
That life at last had handed him a job
He couldn't hope to delegate to honest Nob.

One morn, misled by godlings for their sport,
He glances out upon the garden-court
Beyond his window, where, with musing eyes,
The dear distraction of a girl he spies,
Upon the sill ingenuously leans,
And stares and stares and wonders what it means,
This heavenly rapture in the earthly air,
And cries, like Faust: 'Oh stay! Thou art so fair!'
So Adam may have greeted, in a sigh,
Our general mother. For it seemed to Guy
This was the golden morning of the world.
Advancing Summer all her flags unfurled
To give him joy, but he had eyes to see
Only the fair, the transcendental She,
Compact of dewy earth and sky of dawn,
Moving with hurried steps across the lawn.

The Bubble

She heard his voice, and paused in her advance
To kill our hero with a careless glance,
And smiled to see him dead of her disdain
And with the smile restored his life again.
So, leaping from the window, in one stride
The impetuous young man was at her side.
'Good morning,' she remarked. 'I'm on my way
From Thence to Thither. What a lovely day!
Forgive me if I trespass'

'Ah!' quoth he,
'Trespass for ever, and make hay with me!'
'We've never met,' she said, with haughty brow.
'By heaven's mercy we are meeting now,'
He answered. 'That I cannot let you go
Is all I know and all I need to know.
Come, live with me and be my love, and then
I'll be the mightiest of mortal men.
And though I love in language not my own,
The sentiment at least is mine alone.
Familiar Quotations on my shelf,
Why should I hesitate to help myself
Who lack the art unaided to entice
Your maiden morals to my dear device?
Hey nonny no, my truelove hath my heart:
Since there's no help, let's kiss and never part.'

And while with eye and tongue the amorous youth
Declared his passion and besought her ruth,
He step by step towards his proper room
Constrained her person, hoping to resume
The interview to better purpose there,
Beyond the range of curious Envy's stare
And she was little loth. For once assured
They two alone were suitably immured,
Meekly she listened to his love at last,
Nor sought to loose the hands that held her fast.
Meekly: yet in her glance a kindling fire
That seemed to promise all he could desire.
'O Moon of my delight, O Rose of bliss,
Kindly inform me, without prejudice,
Whether you find my features to your taste.
The Sun of Time is setting - oh make haste!
Darling —'

'You mustn't call me that,' she sighed,
On such a short acquaintance'

He replied:

'I'll call you Flower of Night and Morning Star,
I'll call you all the miracles you are,

Gerald Bullett

Titania I'll call you, Queen of Weirdry,
Helen of Troy, and Guenever, and Deirdre,
My dove, my joy, my precious piggesnye:
All this I'll call you if you'll call me Guy!¹
Whereat she cooed, with pretty feigned shame:
'Call me Penelope: it is my name.'
And raised her eyes, for pity of his drouth,
And yielded him the magic of a mouth
Warm as the western wind and fragrant as the south.

CANTO THE FOURTH

The scene proposed to your indulgent view
Demands, you think, an asterisk or two,
Or, if the asterisk is out of date,
The coy quadruple dot, to indicate
(Seemly insinuation, nothing said)
That here they made a bee-line for the bed,
Impetuous Guy and fair Penelope,
But you are much mistaken, as you'll see.
That asterisks were in our hero's eye
It would be disingenuous to deny:
That dots were never dancing in his brain
Is an hypothesis I'll not maintain:
But I affirm, and it is sober fact,
That nothing followed from their loving pact
To justify – the lady was so nice –
Any such typographical device.
She stayed an idle hour to bill and coo,
Then parted from him with a chaste adieu,
Leaving the youth to burn and sigh for her
Without a stain upon his character.

With scarce a mark, moreover, on the page
Wherein he'd hoped to edify the age:
Appalled to find Parnassus such a high hill,
'Part One' he'd written – *et præterea nihil*.
On these two words his eye distracted fell:
'Tom Merridew,' he said, 'may go to hell.'
For now he'd learned, of fair Penelope,
That everything but love was vanity.
Yes, everything but love he would rescind
As vanity, a striving after wind:
What love might prove to be was still to learn.
He struck a match and watched the paper burn:

The Bubble

But with an absent mind, dreaming of whom
With fragrances had filled his desert room,
And raised a conflagration with a kiss,
To warm her ego in another's bliss.

And thence, twixt tender smile and peevish pout,
The callow comedy must be played out.
Penelope, thereafter, every day,
While summer's glory burned itself away,
Guy Chevenix's chambers did frequent,
And gave him kisses to her own content.
Ah kind she was, and yet not kind enough:
She suffered him to toy without rebuff,
She gave him back his kisses by the score,
Closed the account and mutely asked for more.
But when, like loving Saunders, frank and free,
He cried 'A bed! A bed for you and me!'
She answered 'No,' denying while she kissed,
With fond caresses praying him desist,
Vowing her resolution, while she wooed,
To keep the jewel of her maidenhood,
Her pride of chastity. 'Queen Anne is dead,
And so is Queen Victoria,' he said.
'We've changed all that. Perhaps you hadn't heard?'
But neither pleading nor derisive word
Could shake the virtue of Penelope
Or cause her to repeal her cold decree.

The weeks went by, and every morn she came,
To feed, nor ever quench, his ardent flame;
To stroke his hair with tantalising hand,
And measure how much teasing he could stand.
And 'tis to be inferred she found it fun
To be for ever wooed and never won,
Being so nicely virtuous. But he
Grew weary of her wanton chastity.
'For your complaisance I no longer hope,
And Tarquin's talent is beyond my scope.
Therefore I pray you visit me no more:
Nobby my man will show you to the door.'
She, strangely mild, declared herself a brute,
And shed a tear upon his flannel suit.

'Madam,' he answered, 'you are not to blame
Who with cool fingers set my heart aflame,
But rather I – who could not, with that fire,
Kindle in you one spark of my desire.

Gerald Bullett

Nor let the milk of kindness in your veins
Curdle for my incendiary pains.
This heart, so late consumed with love of you,
By your demur is made as good as new.
Forgive me then that I, who burned so bold,
Must leave you as I found you, kind but cold.
Give me a clean sheet, as to you give I;
And, each alone, in our clean sheets we'll lie.'

Drooping she hears the disenamoured swain,
And so she goes, and never comes again.
And that, said Guy, is that. But he was wrong.
For as one afternoon he strolled along
The silvan purlieus of a public park,
He met young Archibald, a fellow-spark,
Who said: 'Cheer-holy! Isn't it a lark!
If all goes well with my fiancée's plan,
To-morrow I shall be a married man.
She'd bagged a brace before she spotted me.
Husbands I mean. So I am number 3,
And, Guy, believe me or believe me not,
All three of us are Archibalds, God wot!
So shake my hand, old bean, and wish us luck,
Me and Penelope. The precious chuck!'
Was So-and-So the lady's second name,
Asked Chevenix. And Archie said: 'The same.'

So home he hurried, mastering his sob,
And thus addressed himself to listening Nob:
'Nobby, my friend, now cracks a noble heart,
The feast is finished and the guests depart.
For Bruges or Bukarest we'll now entrain,
And never look upon a girl again.
To Corsica or Calais we'll take ship,
Nor hold more commerce with a lying lip.
But me no buts (to quote the elder bards)
But counsel take of Bradshaw and his pards,
And, if perchance you do not like their looks,
Go get a taxi and consult with Cook's.
We must be gone. Pray do not ask me where.
Our destination, Nob, is your affair.
Let it be Leeds or China or Peru,
Texas, or Trinidad or Timbuctoo,
Wigan or Worms or Warsaw, 'tis all one,
And there is nothing new under the sun.
For, let it be distinctly understood,
Life's at the lees, the worm is in the wood.'
Nob answered: 'Yes, sir. Very good, sir. Very good.'

The Bubble

CANTO THE FIFTH

So leaving Guy to seek, in foreign parts,
Oblivion, the salve of broken hearts,
Now turn we to Minoover, whom we find
Irradiating love for all mankind
And looting alcohol without a blush
At Lady Ludo's literary crush.
A pride of lions, parked in an hotel
Midway twixt Bloomsbury and the coast of Chel,
It was the most magnificent affair,
And positively everyone was there.
By everyone I mean Belinda Bosh,
The life and soul of every social squash,
By everyone I mean Mufanwy Meer
Who publishes her novel every year,
By everyone I mean Sir Percy Hack
Who always brings a joke with him to crack,
By everyone I mean the cultured crowd:
Lilian Trumpeter and Daisy Loud,
And Aubrey Gush, and Mrs. Godfrey Screem
(Whose latest book, *A Dream within a Dream*
As she will not allow us to forget,
Was praised by members of the Cabinet),
By everyone I mean the Earl of X,
Author of *Wonderings* and *Whither Sex*,
And all the crew whose literary capers
You see reported in the weekly papers.

So to the sun I hold my farthing rush,
In humble emulation of our Gush,
Our gossip-writing Gush, whose social hints
Give tone and fragrance to the public prints.
Yet how, O Muse, oh how can we, who lack
The lyric inspiration of a Hack,
Hope to do justice to so high a theme,
Which well might tax the talent of a Screem?
Let it suffice that everyone worth while
Bathes in the sunshine of the Ludo smile,
And all who know the value of good victuals
Enjoy the literary beer and skittles.

Minoover, scion of a mighty clan,
Inspection proves to be a tubby man.
From natty feet to pendulating locks
He measures fifty inches in his socks.

Gerald Bullett

His mincing gait and ripe rotundity
Give little index of profundity,
But, could we circumnavigate his brain,
We'd never dare to laugh at him again.
A piping voice he has, this king of men,
But Jove's own thunder issues from his pen,
And women woo his favour with a sigh,
And budding Shakespeares crowd to catch his eye,
His prim falsetto is the voice of God,
And reputations tremble at his nod.

See where he lingers, this refulgent star,
Shedding his light on Lady Ludo's bar,
And let us try if it may be divined
What thoughts are moving in that massive mind.
He sips and smiles, and, as he smiles and sips,
Self-approbation nestles on his lips.
With mild demeanour, being filled with food,
He looks upon the world and finds it good.
Let him but lift that plump imperial hand,
And Merridew will turn at his command.
(For over there, within a yard or two,
Merridew stands, discussing Merridew.)
The ancient hills observe the glad event,
The valleys sing: 'Minoover is content!'
The seven seas rejoice: the listening isles
Echo with glad accord: 'Minoover smiles!'
But see, unwelcome thoughts are waking now
Behind Minoover's corrugated brow:
For he remembers what he would forget,
A certain article not written yet:
The memory bursts upon him like a bomb
And with a manly scream he calls for Tom.
'Thomas, what fiction have you coming out?'

Now here's a problem. It is not in doubt
The Merridew had drunk a quart or so
Of whisky, but the world will never know
Whether his answer owed its inspiration
Solely to that sublime intoxication
Or whether Thomas really did intend
To pull the leg of his illustrious friend.
'To-morrow,' he replied, 'October 6,
As good Fish in the Sea, by Chevenix.'
'Ah, tell me more!' the eager critic cried,
And Merridew most willingly complied.

The Bubble

'The hero is a certain Walter Wheeze,
A barrister who gets enormous fees.
He has a friend called Alf, a belted earl,
And he and Alf are courting the same girl.
Which, as a husband, would the better please:
Penurious earl? Or rich untitled Wheeze?
Sometimes she thinks it would be rather *chic*
To run an earl on fifty bob a week:
At other times it seems more *comme il faut*
To take the cash and let the countess go
A tug-of-war twixt snobbery and greed.
A very pretty notion, you'll concede.
Some other characters you ought to mention
In Mr. Chevenix's gay invention
Are Captain Stallyax (make much of him)
Bernard the cockatoo, a pup called Pim,
Sir Herbert Funk, K.C., and Edgar Slade,
All brilliantly conceived and well portrayed.'

'Cut out the compliments,' Minoover said.
'I can do all that nonsense on my head.
I want the facts. Now let me get this straight.
What is the woman called?'

'Her name is Kate,
Kate Nettlebed. Her name is Gertie Nunn.
They only call her Marjorie for fun.
The novel opens with a London fog,
Romantic meeting, tender dialogue.
Evadne Gossamer - '

'Now who is she?'

Minoover asked.

'She's Gertie, don't you see?
On Thursday afternoons they call her Pat:
I'm sure you see the subtlety of that,'
Said Merridew with an engaging leer.
'I see it,' said Minoover. 'Have no fear.
I like the story. It is sterling stuff.'
He made a pencil note upon his cuff:
*The Pirandello influence is strong,
But life is brief, and art, they say, is long.*
'Now tell me, Tom,' he said. 'What does she do?
Which does she choose to marry of the two?'
And Thomas answered: 'Boy, she chooses both.
To Walter and to Alf she plights her troth,
Of Alfred and of Walt becomes the wife,
To Walt and Alf is faithful all her life.
You get the broad idea?'

'I do. I do.'

Gerald Bullett

You've got a winner there, and my review
Will make it clear to all his kin and kith
That here's a writer to be reckoned with.
No more, dear boy! You've told me quite enough,
So now I'll hobble home and do my stuff.'

Minoover went, and Tommy's owlsh eyes
Gazed at the two of him with sad surmise,
And pure Oblivion crowned the ebrious enterprise.

CANTO THE SIXTH

Almost too good to be at first believed,
This glad intelligence the world received,
That Guy, whose talent never was in doubt,
At last had brought his brilliant novel out.
Minoover's tribute in the *Morning Sun*
Proved adequate in other ways than one:
For everyone who studied that review
Was quite convinced he'd read the story through.
The characters, the plot, the atmosphere,
Minoover made it all so crystal clear
That all industrious diners-out were able
To keep their ends up at the dinner-table
With 'What a book! What irony! What pith!'
'Been nothing like it since George Meredith!'
'One sees of course a trace of Pirandello.'
'D'you know the author? A delightful fellow'
'How too symbolical, that London fog!'
'And isn't Pim the *most* appealing dog!'

Far far away, beneath a southern sky,
Mending his mutilated heart, sits Guy.
And Baedeker may tell, so will not I,
What scenes seduce him from his dire disease,
What wonders woo and what distractions please;
What odious outings worthy Nob has planned
And forced upon his master, book in hand:
What boring castles, what eternal churches,
Provide material for these researches.
All this we'll skip, nor linger to unravel
The tangled tedium of foreign travel.

The Bubble

The point to seize, the fact to fasten on,
Is that illustrious Chevenix was gone
Far out of England, and Penelope's note
(Dear Guy, I love your lovely book, she wrote)
Came back to her one fine October day
Endorsed: '*Return to sender. Gone away.*'

Once in the *Morning Sun*, and elsewhere
Seven times, Minoover laid the story bare:
And though he sometimes used a pseudonym
The style was always eloquent of him.
'I make no doubt that one of these fine days,'
Minoover wrote (he loved to coin a phrase)
'Guy Chevenix's unregarded name
Will be recorded on the scroll of fame.
Like Warwick Deeping and George Meredith,
He is a writer to be reckoned with.'

Other reviewers took Minoover's hint,
And soon *their* reckonings appeared in print.
With variants of brave Minoover's creed
Provincial England followed London's lead,
Editors being all resolved to show
That they, no less than he, were in the know,
Despite their discontent that Merridew
Had failed to send them copies for review.
With copious error they rehearse the plot,
Some mention Meredith and some do not,
Some this, some that, illustrious name recall,
But Pirandello gets a word from all.
A few, to show their skill and independence,
Damn the whole novel in a final sentence,
Blandly censorious, frigidly polite,
As 'too derivative' or 'somewhat slight.'
And so the bubble swelled from day to day,
Blown out with gossip voices. Whether they
Allowed him genius, or disallowed,
Upon the whole they did our hero proud.

Excited rumour ran from friend to friend:
From John O'Groat's it travelled to Land's End.
They praised the book in Leeds and Pimlico,
In Leicester Square, and Paternoster Row,
Filling the town with tidings of its wit
Till even booksellers got wind of it,
And this unwelcome thought their slumbers shook,
That now at last they'd have to sell a book.

Gerald Bullett

With martyred mien they faced the horrid task
And rang up Thomas Merridew to ask:
'*As Good Fish in the Sea* – can you supply?'
And Thomas gaily answered: 'No, not I!'
But lest this simple truth should sound too curt,
And booksellers be mystified or hurt,
He added, in a tone of tenderness:
'O.P. The next edition's in the press'
Whereat, for this postponement of their pain,
They sighed their thanks and went to sleep again.

Thrice round these isles the rumour ran, and then
It reached the ears of certain gentlemen
Of credit and renown who held in fee
The realm of fable and high poesy,
And kindly undertook to make it clear
Which boy was top in any given year,
And on that budding shoot, to make it grow,
Both cash and commendation would bestow.
Now were they come, the dry salubrious Marsh,
The Lynd, whose wit is lethal, never harsh,
The Binyon, fount of harmony and light,
And, last, the Squire that Time would prove a knight
(Shades of investiture began to close
About the growing boy). Let us suppose
We see them met in all their pomp and pride,
The year's momentous question to decide:
Who is the happy author? Who is he
That every babe in arms would wish to be?
'Now, chaps,' says one. 'Correct me if I'm wrong:
This year our business won't detain us long.
Guy Chevenix's novel, you'll admit,
Is super-eminent in charm and wit.
So how about it?' Seeking for a clue,
Each looks at each and wonders if it's true.
But Robert knows that Edward's taste is nice,
And Binyon looks to Robert for advice.
While Ed and Jack and Bob of Laurence Binyon
Share (as do I) a very high opinion.
So each is sure the others must be right,
And all is gas and gaiters and delight.
The question's answered that these islands ask,
And concord crowns with joy the tedious task.
'Guy is the guy for us,' they say. 'And lo,
The pubs will soon be open. Let us go.'

So runs my dream. But, lest the reader find
Some innuendo where there's none designed,

The Bubble

And think to learn, from this innocuous sheet,
Talk of the town or scandal of the Street,
I'll now declare the truth about my story,
Its single virtue and peculiar glory:
That here is fancy pure and undefiled,
Pelion of falsehood upon Ossa piled.
Yea, though my rhyme be raw, my art uncouth,
I'm proud to say that no industrious sleuth
Will ever find herein the smallest taint of truth.

CANTO THE SEVENTH

Beyond the sphere of Chevenix's fame,
Immune from noise or knowledge of the same,
Our Chevenix had found in southern seas
A happy land where he could live at ease,
And, following his idle fancy's bent,
Enjoy his grievance to his heart's content;
A blessed island furnished à la mood
Romantical, with nature in the nude:
A paradise of palms and still lagoons,
Exotic suns and large unlikely moons,
Where Fortune smiles on smiling indolence,
And haunting fragrances persuade the sense
That all eternity is here and now:
And, last (not least, I think you will allow),
Among the interior fixtures may be found
Seductive damsels with hibiscus crowned.
Encircling seas, jasper and chrysophase,
Make murmuring music of the nights and days:
And summer skies present a changing view
Hardly excelled in Shaftesbury Avenue.

For any lover who has had the bird
Time's the great healer, as you may have heard.
And Time was at his customary tricks
In dealing with the case of Chevenix.
For Time delights to turn, with cynic humour,
Our proudest passion to a distant rumour,
Delights to pluck a lover by the sleeve
And urge the old Adam towards another Eve.
So it befell that Guy forgot to grieve,
Forgot the hussy he had left behind,
Forgot his bitter thoughts of womankind,

Gerald Bullett

Nor looked ahead, nor pined for what was not,
But learned to love the beauty on the spot
A score of girls, with artless invitation
(They'd never heard of sex-emancipation,
No one had told them of the Right to Love
Or how disastrous chastity may prove)
– These poor untutored daughters of the sun,
For whom the Facts of Life were merely fun,
Acting without Psychology's advice,
Persuaded Guy they thought him very nice:
Who, glancing now from face to flowerlike face,
Enchanted by the lithe and languid grace,
The unskirted comeliness, the honey hue,
Responded in effect 'The same to you.'
And one there was, the fairest and the best,
To whom he murmured, as her hand he pressed:
'With you I will set up my everlasting rest.'

Man asks but little. Give him golden skies
And all the joys that nature can devise
Or fantasy conceive or art invent,
And he'll contrive to be awhile content.
Five weeks or so endured our hero's bliss,
Subtly diminishing from kiss to kiss,
And then the music of an older love
Within his haunted heart began to move,
The love of England, who with infinite
Variety of charm and mother-wit,
With dear inconstancy and gay surprises,
Delights her lovers in a thousand guises.
'One lack, my sweet Calypso,' murmurs he,
'Frustrates our hearts of full felicity:
One lack I've noticed ever since I came.
You have no weather: every day's the same.
So let us sail to England's pleasant isle
Where there is weather all the blessed while.'

Behold our hero between nap and nap
Luxuriously pillowed in her lap.
His voice is drowsy as the hum of bees,
And nothing that he says can fail to please
This honey-hearted daughter of the south
(O green oasis in a world of drouth!)
Whose love leans over him with petal cheeks,
Whose gentle fingers fondle as he speaks.
'To England then,' resumes the ardent boy,
'To England we will go, and there employ

The Bubble

A parson who with holy bag of tricks,
Shall make your name Calypso Chevenix.'
But understanding naught of what she's heard
She laughs and loves and answers not a word:
Whereat his resolution waxes strong,
And satisfaction fills his heart with song:
'O joy supreme, wherein there is no lack!
A perfect wife: she cannot answer back.'

A cable to his banker told the town
That Guy was coming home to settle down,
And fair Calypso must alas begin
Contriving clothes to hide her beauty in
And now be swift to tell, O laggard Muse,
How London jumped for joy to hear the news:
How from the far Pacific he came back,
And crossed the Channel in a fishing-smack,
And deputations met him on the beach,
And Mr. Baldwin made a lovely speech,
And gushing ladies talked our hero sick,
And pressmen shot him with remorseless click,
And portly parsons praised his moral power,
And shrewd reporters asked his favourite flower
And when he swore the novel wasn't his
'O fie!' the ladies simpered, 'oh you quiz!'
And word went round, for general release,
SHY NOVELIST DENIES HIS MASTERPIECE.

Companioned by Calypso, helped by Nob,
At last he manages to lose the mob,
And gets him home, confusion in his head,
To seek the sovran solace of the bed.
There let us leave him. Waking he will learn
That peace is vanished, never to return.
Americans will seek him by the score
And editors encamp about his door.
He'll hear, though he deny with bursting lungs,
His talent lauded by a million tongues:
For nothing he can ever say or do
Will make the mugs believe it isn't true,
Nothing prevent, if he live out his span,
His growing some day to a Grand Old Man,
And nothing, though the dying lips drop gall,
Nothing, though the indignant heavens fall,
Nothing avert at last the Abbey burial.

FINIS.

Cross-Section

LETTERS TO NIGERIA

III

PALL MALL,

August 20th.

MY DEAR N.

Since I wrote to you last month three deaths of varying degrees of public interest have occurred. In order of importance that of Field-Marshal Hindenburg, President of the German Reich, comes first. The second is that of Dr. Dolfuss, late Dictator of Austria. The third is that of the spirit of Anglo-Australian Test Cricket. All three are as dead as door-nails at the moment, but all three, for anything I know, may enjoy re-incarnation at some future time.

The final and deciding Test Match of the season is in progress at the Oval as I write, and the Australians have made so far something over 480 for two wickets in the first innings. There is no time-limit to this match and some people are saying that towards the end of the game when the ground gets hard with frost the Australians will insist on our using only our very slowest lob-bowlers.

Seriously, the whole thing has become a farce; and a quite definitely unpleasant kind of farce. I have not come across a soul during the last week even in cricketing circles, who cares 'a hoot which side wins this game and the

"Ashes." ' The Australian team may be representative, but the English team certainly is not. One well-known cricket writer habitually refers to it as the English 2nd XI. Our two best fast bowlers have been left out and our best captain, because the Australians objected to them; and so, if the latter break all records by scoring 1,000 runs in one innings, no one here will mind. There are likely to be more grins than glum looks on the faces even of the Oval crowd.

I needn't discuss the rights and wrongs of 'Leg-theory' bowling. Some cricketers favour it, some do not. But there is no question about its legality or that the Australians would ever have objected to it if Larwood had not been so very fast a bowler. You will remember how Tom Richardson used to bowl on that plumb Oval wicket, and how he once came down to play against the School and how you survived three balls from him, scoring a four and then having your middle stump knocked spinning a dozen yards. We used to think him the fastest bowler in the world then, as I suppose he was, though there was a legend that Spofforth, the Australian, had been faster. But I am told by experts that Larwood is a great deal faster than Richardson ever was in his prime.

Well, this, as far as I can make out,

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seems to be the bottom of the whole trouble. The present generation of Australian batsmen, and Don Bradman in particular, have never had an opportunity of getting used to really fast bowling and cannot face or play it. The notoriously unsporting Australian cricket crowds could not stand seeing their idol the Don backing away and getting bowled or caught – off high bouncing balls which as one old ‘pro.’ said, W. G. would have hit ‘off ’is ear’ole’ out of the ground – and insisted that there must be something ‘unfair’ about Larwood’s methods. The Australian Control Board thereupon lodged a protest in extremely offensive terms and the fat was in the fire.

Perhaps it is really, however, the Committee of the M.C.C. that is most to blame at present. It gave the Australians some sort of assurance that they would not have to face fast bowling of the ‘body-line’ type on the present tour, yet failed to give any ruling which would make such bowling illegal or, indeed, in the slightest degree improper. ‘Body-line’ is in itself a question begging term. That is made perfectly obvious by the fact that Larwood takes far more wickets clean bowled than caught. So if his bowling is ‘body-line’ it is also ‘wicket-line.’ It is dangerous, of course, in a sense, but that is true about all really fast bowling on a hard wicket.

I am not defending ‘leg-theory.’ I have no definite opinion as to whether its abolition would be good for the game or not. I am only trying to tell you what seems to be the general view of the English cricket-loving public. I think

it might fairly be stated something like this: If leg-theory bowling is wrong then the laws of cricket ought to be so altered as to make it impossible. If it is not wrong, and is only objected to because England happens to possess at the moment the finest and fastest, and most dangerously accurate bowler in the world, then the M.C.C. should stand by Larwood and Jardine – not to mention Voce and A. W. Carr – and tell the Australian Board of Control that if their men are unwilling to play our fast bowlers they had better stay in Australia.

On the whole, the best comment I have seen on the present position is contained in a letter from the veteran golfer J. H. Taylor, which *The Times* prints on its leader page. He suggests that the phrase ‘It isn’t cricket’ is now ‘meaningless and effete,’ and that we might do well to ‘regain a lost significance by saying “It isn’t golf,”’ instead.

Well, so much for all that. Personally I hope that English and Australian cricketers will not meet again on the field until 1944 at the earliest. By that time the Australian captain will have retired and Larwood, if he is still bowling, will at any rate have lost much of his pace.

* * *

To return to more serious subjects, I think that the death of Hindenburg the other day, at the age of eighty-seven was a misfortune not only for Germany but for Europe. If he had died six or twelve months ago it would certainly have been a disaster, for he possessed

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in a very remarkable degree the confidence of every class in Germany, and without his pressure the establishment of the Hitler *régime* on a firm basis would have been very difficult if not impossible.

I, as you know, am in favour of Hitler, not because I like his methods, but because he has established the first really stable government that Germany has possessed during the sixteen years since the war, and after all, from our standpoint, that is the first essential of stable foreign relations. For years we have known exactly where we are in dealing with Italy because for all practical purposes Mussolini is Italy. Now we know (or ought to know) exactly where we are in dealing with Germany, since beyond all doubt Hitler's voice is the voice of Germany. He got a 90 per cent. national vote on Sunday in favour of his combining in himself the offices of President and Chancellor – which, of course, means constitutional dictatorship – and, discount that figure how you will, it is surely good enough. He will rule Germany as long as he lives, just as Mussolini will rule Italy and Mustapha Kemal, Turkey. And I think he will live long.

For I have noticed it as an odd fact in history that such men as these do not get assassinated. (Lincoln is an arguable exception.) They are 'men of destiny', men who represent so much more than themselves that even bullets somehow miss them. This, you will say, is rank mysticism, and so in a sense it is. My only answer to such a charge is that I should be ready to

back my opinion as to Hitler's immunity from the knife or the bullet or an assassin up to a considerable sum of money, and to offer 10 to 1 odds.

Certain men seem to come into the world to do certain things, and until they have done them they cannot be killed by 'accident' as it were. Such men are recognizable; indeed it is because they are recognizable that they obtain so tremendous a hold over great masses of men and women. I thought I recognized Hitler as such a man when I met him in Berlin fifteen months ago. I should not like to have a Hitler in England, but if I were a German I should follow him blindly wherever he led, for he is the spirit of Germany. And he is a man of peace. That is what most foreigners do not seem able to believe. Everyone knows that Germany really needs peace for at least a generation to come, and Hitler, being in effect the conscious expression of the sub-conscious mind of Germany, will keep the peace, at almost all costs, if he is able.

Possibly, therefore, Hindenburg's work was really done, and his death is not of great importance. There is no doubt that he regarded Hitler as his spiritual successor, and wished him to succeed to the position of titular, as well as executive, head of the Reich. He lived just long enough to secure that, and then there was no reason why he should live any more. So he died! – as they say in the Book of Chronicles.

Have you ever considered how romantically extraordinary Hinden-

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burg's life has been? If a really truthful biography of Rufus Isaacs is ever written the story of his career will touch a pretty high pitch of romance, but it will be nothing to the story of Hindenburg.

Hindenburg gained his first decoration for distinguished service sixty-eight years ago at the decisive battle of Sadowa against the Austrians. He gained further distinction in the war of 1870, and was present in the great hall of the Palace of Versailles when the Germans dictated to France the terms of peace which made Alsace-Lorraine a part of Prussia. After that he was not much heard of, and at the age of sixty-two he was pensioned off and went to live in the dull old city of Hanover as retired Generals are wont to live, taking his daily constitutional and his daily pot of beer at his favourite café. Thus for four or five years he continued, enjoying the evening of his life. He did not know that his real life had not yet begun, and that he had twenty years of hard service in front of him.

He is sixty-seven when he is called to the colours again. The Russians have invaded East Prussia in force, burning, looting and ravishing. Suddenly someone at headquarters remembers that old Hindenburg had made a special study of the terrain of the Masurian lakes with a view to just such a situation. A telegram reaches the old man in Hanover. He dons the uniform that he had never expected to wear again. Within a week he is in command in East Prussia with Ludendorff as his Chief of Staff. Within another

week he has won, at Tannenberg, the most decisive single victory of the whole war and has killed or captured every man of the northern Russian army. No Russians ever again crossed the German frontier.

Throughout the rest of the war Hindenburg was only a figure-head. Ludendorff was in real command. Then suddenly the end comes and the figure-head shows that in truth he is the greatest man of them all. The soldiers revolt and elect 'Soldiers' Councils'. Officers cut off their shoulder straps. The Kaiser flies to Holland. Ludendorff rushes to Berlin, shaves off his moustache, dons a sombrero and escapes by air to Sweden. Hindenburg sticks to the great army and leads it back to Germany for demobilisation in perfect military order.

In that month of December, 1918, I saw the entry of the famous Fifth Division of the Prussian Guard into Berlin. The officers, minus swords and shoulder straps, were mounted and in charge, the men, 10,000 of them, looked dourly magnificent, with not a smile for the welcoming populace; the discipline was perfect. And that was Hindenburg. The army trusted him.

A few years later, and again he is called to the rescue in an emergency to become, although an avowed Monarchist, official head of the republican Reich. In that office he continues until his death, and sticks to his conception of duty, above all parties, so doggedly and so successfully that when he dies he is honoured and mourned

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not only by every party in Germany, but in every country in the world without exception. What a career! The old man of sixty-seven leaves his pot of beer, half-finished as it were, in his Hanover café to depart for twenty years of fame and service and real greatness. 'Can you beat it?'

* * *

The assassination of Dr. Dolfuss, Chancellor of Austria, was a very different affair. It was almost universally hailed as a European disaster of the first magnitude. It created a quite extraordinary panic all over Europe. Everyone was talking and thinking war for quite a week. But, fortunately, no one managed to 'think up' a *casus belli* for or against anyone else in particular. So the fictitious danger passed. Incidentally, Baldwin delivered in that week the silliest speech of his whole career – which is saying something. Defending the increased Air Estimates in the House of Commons, he remarked that in future we must regard not the Cliffs of Dover but the left bank of the Rhine as our frontier. What he meant I don't know, and I doubt if he really knew himself. Anyhow it was nonsense. But the French, of course, were delighted. They took the words, very naturally, to mean that England was at last about to agree to a military alliance with France, and they purred with satisfaction.

It is stupid to mislead foreigners – and especially the French – in such a way. It can only lead to misunderstanding, disappointment and consequent ill-feeling in the end. Baldwin

knows perfectly well not only that he has no authority to commit England to any sort of anti-German combination, but that if he did there is scarcely an able-bodied man in England who would volunteer to fight again on the side of the French as long as the memory of the last war and of the Peace of Versailles remains alive. Everywhere in England opinion is hardening in the direction of isolation to the utmost extent that may be practicable. Not a soul thinks of the Rhine as our frontier, not would do so even if Germany were to re-arm up to the standard of French armament.

But about Dolfuss. As you know, he was a very small man, an inch or two under five feet.

His physical size is worth referring to because I am convinced that it had a material effect upon his whole policy. You know what a terror a pugnacious little man can be. Knowing he is no use with his hands he tends to acquire an exaggerated faith in the virtues of bullets. Dolfuss was a tough little devil with marvellous nerve and not much else except a strong and sincere devotion to the Catholic Church, and probably (though he never confessed it in so many words) also to the Hapsburg dynasty.

It is never possible to justify assassination as a political weapon, yet it is certainly true to say that if anyone ever 'asked for it', little Dolfuss did. His position was altogether anomalous and unstable. He was a pinch-beck Dictator, of very moderate mental abilities, aping much greater men, and

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able to hold his position for a time only by means of his temporary control of the army. That and his nerve were his two great assets, added to the fact that he enjoyed almost universal support abroad because he stood above all things for the principle of an independent Austria.

But in Austria itself he had no real popular support at all. The Church was willing to put the last of its resources at his disposal, and perhaps on a 'show-down' he might have secured 30 per cent. of the votes of the electorate. But certainly not more than that. And a dictator who is without popular support—unless he has an extraordinarily perfect administration and secret police organization such as Stalin, for example, has created—cannot successfully dictate. If he hadn't been killed last month he would have been next month. For he represented nothing that is alive in the spirit of post-war Austria. He sought to rule by ruthlessness and sheer ferocity—the ferocity of the weak. He must have been a very nice little man, I think, and certainly very brave, but he tried to bite off much more than he could chew.

All the youth of Austria, whether Socialist or Nazi, were against him, and it is of youth that every would-be Dictator must think first. Neither Mussolini nor Hitler made any mistake about that. But Dolfuss made every possible mistake. Without doubt he intimidated the Socialists last February, when he actually brought field guns into the streets of Vienna and shelled

the wonderful model buildings which the Socialist Municipal Council had erected for workmen's flats. But that was all. He had suppressed revolution, perhaps, but at the cost of doubling the number of his enemies.

* * *

I was very interested to get that Japanese undervest you sent me. It was an excellent garment, and if it had been a size or two larger I would have kept it to wear myself. As it was I gave it to my charwoman for one of her sons. She has so many that it is bound to fit one of them. You say that in spite of an import duty of 3*d.* such garments, made in Japan, sell at 9*d.* on the West Coast. That means that the Japanese exporter can get only about 4½*d.* or 5*d.* for it out of which he must pay carriage over several thousand miles. Well, I give it up. Lancashire cannot compete with prices like that, even with the help of any reasonably conceivable tariff. It will have, I suppose, to give up its cheap export trade and devote itself to the manufacture of those 'finer counts' in which it has still no rival in the world.

I had really intended to write something in this letter about the present trade position, but I have left myself neither space for it, nor time before the mail goes. I must content myself therefore for the moment with saying that even the most optimistic are pleasantly surprised by the returns of the last two months of trade (both home and export), and of unemployment. In the matter of trade recovery, Great Britain is easily leading the

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world, and that fact is really far more important than any of the other matters which I have discussed in this letter. The fall of the dollar as against sterling is hampering our exporters to some extent, but in spite of that the improvement in our trade seems to be both rapid and solid, and nearly half a million men are at work in Great Britain to-day who were unemployed and on the dole two or three months ago. That figure is, after all, the best test of all, and you will agree that it is very satisfactory. England was practically certain to be the first country to feel the effects of any world recovery of trade, but the others are bound to follow, and it looks at the moment as if the general recovery is going to arrive a good deal sooner than even the most optimistic prophets have dared to predict.

I will write more of this next month.

Yours ever,
C. S.

THE MAN WHO IS HAVING HIS SHOES BLACKED

EVERYONE on the tops of the 'buses stares at him, the man who is having his shoes blacked in the Tottenham Court Road. They stare idly - except for the children, who stand up in their seats and continue to stare until their 'bus carries them out of sight. But he thinks that they are looking scornfully at him, inventing stories about this

wretched man who has no one at home to black his shoes for him: perhaps no home at all: a vagabond, who has to tramp the streets of London for hours before he can find anyone willing to black his shoes for him. He stands there self-consciously, one foot raised on the shoe-black's little pedestal. Now the other.

He is trying not to look and see if everyone is staring. He is determined not to turn his head; but his eyes slew round to the furthest corners and then quickly back to a vacant patch of air three feet above the shoe-black's head. He hopes that none of his friends will pass by and see him having his shoes blacked in the Tottenham Court Road. And he hopes that no strangers are looking at him. Everyone on the tops of the 'buses idly stares.

The shoe-black, unconcerned, gives the final polish to the second shoe

M. L.

THE MAITLANDS

IN the London Theatre is a piece by a young man who was regarded as among the better younger dramatists. Since writing it he has been killed in France. It is called *The Maitlands*, and, in detail and method, is very like a play by Tchegov, but without Tchegov's nostalgia for order and beauty or that touching serenity with which Tchegov realises the impossibility of such wishes. In other words, there is no pronounced attitude behind the play. Its merit rests on exhibiting a higher degree of

Cross-Section

sensibility than we are accustomed to from London dramatists.

It sets out to depict the dreariness of life in a small seacoast town; but hints little enough beyond showing that young people get bored and misconstrue into sexual terms their wider and vaguer desires. The play has not the symphonic quality of Tchekhov – it has not that undertone which should, when the curtain has fallen, echo with us, a thin wordless cry of people who feel cut off from the centre of life.

Mr. John Gielgud played the part of a schoolmaster nervously well, the part of one who is out of his element in the town and who suffers separation in love. But, whether the fault lie with author or actor, a sort of peevishness appeared instead of pathos.

The play, with all its failings, is yet better to watch than several so-called successes which are running at the moment.

MARIONETTES

THERE is a dance of clowns. All at once their heads fly off. They continue to dance. The heads slip down the threads and rejoin the necks.

Later, as the dance grows more exciting, not only does the head withdraw from the shoulders, but each limb of each puppet moves outwards from its joint. The clowns are fragmented. Yet they go on dancing.

This is probably the greatest mixture of illusion and fact that the theatre can present to us.

A NOISE

I LIVE in a block of flats. Recently, after midnight, someone on the floor below began to hammer firmly and continuously. Perhaps some new idea about his furniture had just occurred to him at that hour. One could almost feel the whole vast building shiver at such an outrage.

A righteous neighbour began to tap a reprimand upon the wall, hammering sharply and quickly and suddenly ceasing. There was a silence.

Then, after a minute, the first hammerer began again, but as if trying to make no noise, apologetically.

The righteous neighbour's taps broke out again in a crescendo of furious rebuke and ceased; and, although the first hammerer was still at it, his blows grew fainter, dwindled sadly away, and soon ceased altogether. He had been put in his place.

DOWN-AND-OUT

'HAVE you a cigarette?'

If you walk along the Embankment towards midnight or through Birdcage Walk, voices will ask you this question every twenty yards or so. The voices come from men sitting or lying on the benches or on the ground.

They would like a cigarette. But they want more, much more, than that. These words are the signal of distress.

Open-air sleepers in London seem more numerous than ever. Along by the railings of Birdcage Walk they wrap themselves in newspapers and lie in shadowy heaps.

G. B.

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DEW ON THE GRASS. By EILUNED LEWIS. Lovat Dickson. 7s. 6d.

THE Vaughan children were lucky enough to live in Wales – in that part of Wales where the Severn starts its stream, heedless of the broad reaches which flood the English counties. Lucky in that, they were luckier in that one of them was quick to realize and able to render the beauty of that held life, that little world which means so much more to a child when its limits are not stone and curb, street and thoroughfare, noise arrested occasionally into a fearful silence, but sky, and meadows and full fields and country lanes and distant market town and a silence of which country sounds are but the expressive symbol. Lucky in that country retreat, Miss Lewis (for she is evidently the child who writes here of her family) was lucky again in having Aunt Shan, who lived by the estuary of the Dovey and welcomed her nieces and nephew there for their holidays. Those whose lives are twisted and distracted by the incessant machinery and its irritations may find the peace and joy of this book not easy to believe; but others, of any age, will recognize a truth in it as sure as its loveliness, as calm as its safety, as exciting as those adventures which the

spirit can enjoy when it is free from the dominion of accident.

Accidents happen, of course, in Arcadia as in Whitefriars: but in the country they are not of life's pattern. A strange and angry beggar, a pleasant and helpful poacher, one's own mistaken inclination to treat little brother as an exceptionally well-jointed doll, a sudden thunderstorm, ruining the hay – these are but accidents, unexpected, enjoyable because rarely encountered. The background and the pattern of life, even as explained by grown-ups, are peace and happiness, and an ordinariness which is too varied in its incidence and its colour ever to become monotonous. All detail to Miss Lewis is symbolic; and in consequence all persons too have that symbolic value which is overlooked or forgotten in a world where men and women become means to an end infinitely lower than themselves.

In his delightful preface to this delightful book, Mr. Charles Morgan seems to think of this life as something almost lost to us. No doubt it is threatened; no doubt in some places it has gone; and alas! there are those who plan – ill-omened word – for its extinction. But its reality is assured if there is any assurance in humanity; and if the world be so ordered and conditioned

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that this kind of life become impossible here, there are nurseries in Heaven, and they must be recruited to restore the desolation of our mundane society.

TRITON AMONG MINNOWS: LETTERS OF
MRS. COLERIDGE TO THOMAS POOLE.
Nonesuch Press. 16s.

COLERIDGE: STUDIES BY SEVERAL HANDS.
Edited by E. BLUNDEN AND
E. LESLIE GRIGGS. Constable.
10s. 6d.

THESE books – especially *Triton among Minnows* – are far better than the volumes usually evoked by centenary celebrations. Mr. Stephen Potter's edition of Sara Coleridge's letters to Poole, the bad man (politically) of Alfoxden, who gave the Coleridges a home, is extraordinarily fascinating. No one could call Sara an inspired letter writer; but no one can really understand S.T.C., his poetry, his drug taking, his archangelic qualities, without reading these letters. To continue the archangelic metaphor, it is as if one Power, dismissed from Heaven at the time of the rebellion, had delayed his flight downwards, descended on the new-created world, and married one of the children of Adam – a very commonplace daughter. Here we can see how his wings were cut, his feathers dragged, his ankle-winglets sheered off – and all done

under the perfectly honest conviction that the mutilator was making a prudent, respectable, domestic fowl of her husband – a fowl such as Southey, whom sister Edith had had the luck to marry. Mr Potter's introduction is a brilliant piece of work, one of the best interpretations of Coleridge to be published at the time.

Far better than any of the essays in the volume edited by Mr. Blunden and Mr. Griggs; though here too are documents which no student of the poet can afford to miss. The best are the chapters from Ernest Hartley Coleridge's unfinished life of his grandfather; Mr. Blunden's delicate essay on Christ's Hospital – and for its matter, Mr. Eaglestone's paper on the spy who followed Coleridge and Wordsworth on those nights and days when they watched the moon or meditated by the brook near Stowey. There is excellent scholarship in the other essays, careful and useful information, especially in Miss Morley's, Miss Snyder's and Mr. Wilkinson's; but the writing of many articles is rather needlessly pedestrian, though all bibliographers and would-be biographers will find good material in this volume.

LONDON IN MY TIME. By THOMAS
BURKE. Rich and Cowan. 6s.

MR. BURKE's recollections of London begin in the year 1897. He is concerned with the changes the city has

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seen since then – changes in buildings, in habits, in the world of entertainment, of business (as represented by the shops), of traffic and of eating and drinking; and the change in the people. He is at his best in the chapters on *Streets* and *War*: in the latter he recalls with characteristic vividness the small details now nearly forgotten – such as the potato shortage; in *Streets* he takes some admirable walks on ways generally unfamiliar, though he does not mention that Islington's famous 'Angel' is no longer the public-house it was in 1897. When it comes to writing about *People*, every man must be guided by his own recollection; but it seems odd that Mr. Burke apparently never saw either Max or G. K. Chesterton. He is too fond of sweeping generalizations – as in his statement that the novelists of London are not Londoners, a statement disproved immediately by such names as W. W. Jacobs, F. Anstey, Edwin Pugh, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, Arthur Morrison, Violet Hunt, A. P. Herbert and P. G. Wodehouse – all better writers than any of the non-Londoners he mentions except Arnold Bennett and Pett Ridge. Nor is it true that 'The Fitzroy and Charlotte Street, Bohemia did not arise until after the war' – in 1911 the Tour d'Eiffel was known to discreet and impoverished artists, and there were studios in Charlotte Street, Howland Street and Maple Street. Booksellers, especially secondhand booksellers, could deny Mr. Burke's assertion that 'shop-lifting doesn't happen in the small, personal shops'; and long before

1897 women could do their 'household shopping under one roof'—at Shoolbred's, or the Civil Service Stores in Queen Victoria Street, or at the Haymarket Stores or at the Army and Navy. In the pages on restaurants, Mr. Burke forgets to mention Rule's which is as it was, thank God! and Sherry's, which has disappeared; he forgets Kettner's, surely one of the oldest of Soho restaurants, and his declaration that to-day 'the "family" hotel is hardly represented at all' will seem strange to those who know Almond's, Fleming's and the Burlington.

BLIND MEN CROSSING A BRIDGE. By
SUSAN MILES. Constable. 10s.

THESE are the days of the Cellinis of literature. There is an amazingly high level of technical achievement, of sensitive, almost perfect handling of delicate material; the silver is exquisitely chased, the design is elaborate, naughty, witty – but, sometimes, we sigh for the pathetic, young directness and strength of Michael Angelo's *David*, for the great conception and design of the Sistine ceiling. Much modern fiction has, too, a curiously depressing effect. This sense of thinness, of unhappiness, is not caused, or caused only in part, by the uncomfortable subjects and miserable people so often chosen by our novelists. It springs, rather from a sense that the author, though she cares enormously

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for her technique, does not, at bottom, greatly value her characters. They are rarely seen *sub specie eternitatis* – they seem less than themselves, they never become suddenly more, symbols of some mystical vision of life. This is the natural result of the new psychologies, which make man not the precarious and struggling master of his own will, but the plaything of instincts and reactions.

So it is with a sense of relief that we realize that in *Blind Men Crossing a Bridge* the people are intensely valuable, at times almost too valuable, to their author – she cannot always let them move from scene to scene quickly enough, but holds them a little too long in her tender, undeceived gaze, enmeshed in the slow cadences of her rhythmic style. Yet how heartening to see again a great design, a noble pattern. While we watch, it is not only the lives of three generations, in their country villages, in Brittany, in a provincial town, that pass before us, it is life itself – life cruel, bitter, almost unendurable, crushing the timid, the feeble in spirit, the feeble in conscience, the feeble in will or in mind, yet yielding, in the end, to the courageous and unselfish spirit, who remains invulnerable, the master of life, not its victim. We are spared few of the uglinesses that can harm love, yet in the end we believe that love is beauty; we come past Meg, the country girl who feared passion and was broken by it, past Pauline, who used passion and defiled it, to Mazod, who enjoyed and consecrated it. They all move against a

background of natural beauty, a beauty sensitively felt, accurately seen and lovingly described. To each generation the same scenes, the recurrent seasons, the unchanging mutability of nature are a comfort or a mockery, a comfort to the brave, a mockery to the weak, symbols of happiness to young lovers, of sorrow to the bereaved.

Blind Men Crossing a Bridge, though it remains an unusually original and distinctive piece of work, is yet an interesting blend of the older and newer styles of novel writing. It has the largeness and dignity of plan which we associate with the older work; but the treatment of many of the psychological problems, though never inartistic or text-bookish, owes something to the works of Sigmund Freud. The style is an experiment in carefully varied yet monotonous rhythms; and these, though it is conceivable that there are readers who might find them annoying, gives to others, in time, a sense of almost hypnotic beauty and pleasure. The pattern, so beloved of moderns, is strongly marked in both style and plot, perhaps too strongly marked at times. The characters are sometimes too consciously used as symbols, they do not suddenly become them 'by act of God' as it were, and almost, apparently, without their creator's desire or knowledge. This is particularly noticeable in the characters which express violence. To return to the comparison with sculpture, the effect is as if some figures in a great Michael Angelesque design had been executed by Mr. Henry Moore. The design is still

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dignified and monumental, but an element of distortion has entered in. It is as if the author had not slowly and tenderly watched the growth of her characters, as she does with George and Meg, but had seen Hannah Wandless and her hound, Jasper Brough and his crucifix in the glare of a flash of lightning, and had then, helped by patient and ordinary daylight, filled in the details to fit this sudden and monstrous vision. This gives a fine Hugoesque violence of chiaroscuro that can be enjoyed and admired, but it hides for the moment Mrs. Miles' quite exceptional talent for realistic and uncomfortable detail. There is extraordinary skill in her account of the unhappy reactions of poor, village-bred Meg, proud, ill, uncomprehending, to the strange life of a Breton fishing village and its stranger native and foreign inhabitants. The beauty, the shy, inarticulate tenderness of first love has rarely been shown with more delicate detail than in Mrs. Miles' account of the tragic love of George Gurney, the Vicar's son, a poet with the priggishness, squeamishness and despair of sensitive youth, for Meg Quainton, the tranter's daughter, shy, proud, bewildered, tragically tenacious of her grievances. As in George's poem, the love story is shy, wan and cold; but its beauty is pure gold.

In the earliest tenderest spring of the
year
Pale brown are the larches,
Dabbled here and there
With gold, pale gold, pure gold.

Oh, larches most lovely! Oh, exquisite
host,

Is it spring's birth you show us?

— Autumn's ghost.

Frail, wild, wan, cold?

Oh, eyes of my loved one, eyes dark and
forlorn,

Stirs sorrow's wraith in you,

Or joy new-born,

Its secrets still untold?

Mrs. Miles is peculiarly successful in her terrible account of the persecution of gentle, sincere people for their opinions by brutal and stupid folk. The attack on Dill Rectory by drunkards from the village inn (because the Rector and his wife were 'pashfists'), the kittens drowned in the horse-trough and used as missiles will not easily be forgotten. Peculiarly successful, too, is Mrs. Miles' treatment of mental trouble. The little boy arrested in mental development, the half-witted carter, the priest whose religious mania makes him fear impotence, are all given to us with a tender and poetic realism, a truly Christian reverence for their sufferings.

Her tenderness does not, however, prevent a very shrewd grasp of the shamefaced, half-penitent selfishness of Berin, the complete, sensual selfishness of Pauline, the will to cruelty of Kerin. This is a noble and beautiful book, slightly difficult at times in its excessive seriousness, but a rare accession to the small class of genuinely creative fiction.

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MODERN POETRY, 1922-1934. AN
ANTHOLOGY. Compiled by
MAURICE WOLLMAN. Macmillan.
6s.

MR. WOLLMAN has too much enthusiasm for the verse of this time; his anthology is too large. If three hundred supremely good, unquestionable poems have been written in the last twelve years (or almost any other twelve years) they have been the work of only a few poets; and it is only poems of this order that are not hurt by being read between their equals in an anthology. Less essential poetry, good verse and, most of all, arch, sentimental, drawing-room verse (which has invaded this collection) suffers from being read in bulk; it sickens the reader, or at the best paralyses his feelings. The doubt that sentimentality breeds is contagious. It spreads in the reader's mind from poem to poem; and if he is reckless he may be inclined to condemn a whole volume (just as a whole herd of cattle is destroyed if one is found diseased) so as to keep faith in some integrity. The worst of false poetry is that it vitiates the air for true.

So it would have been better if Mr. Wollman had compiled a smaller anthology, limiting himself rigorously to what is best in the poetry of the last twelve years. Then that best would have flowered more fully for the reader; he would be more open to the power of the four poems from Mr. Yeats' last books; to the odd, natural artifice of Hardy; to Mr. Campbell's clarity in *Zebras* and *Choosing a Mast*; the inten-

sity of the verses taken from Mr. de la Mare's *Dreams*; the fresh, ardent voice of Mr. Day Lewis; Lawrence's spates of energy, and such single poems as Mr. Henderson's *Blackbird*, Miss Megroz's *The Silver Bride*.

The arrangement of the book is careful. The poems are grouped according to their themes, but the groups shade into each other at the edges like colours of the rainbow. It seems to me that the section on animals is the best. The minor poets of our time, who have sensibility in excess of other qualities, seem to need a subject definite, curious and concrete, to steady their nerves, to be a body for their vague, teasing apprehensions.

AH, WILDERNESS: DAYS WITHOUT END.
By EUGENE O'NEILL. Cape.
7s. 6d.

WERE there space it would be of interest to compare Mr. O'Neill's progress with Strindberg's. He has entered, earlier than Strindberg, on a religious phase, and these two plays gain amazingly in self-control and beauty from the author's acceptance (personal it would seem as well as dramatic) of standards as definite as Claudel's, if less clearly formulated. *Days without End* is a play on the conversion of an atheist to Catholicism; or rather of his return to that faith. It is bold, original and intense, and moves

Macmillan

Ready September 18

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A MODERN COMEDY

7/6

This is a novel of contemporary London life and the London atmosphere is an important part of it. It is a comedy, but a comedy with a note of danger. Captain Nicholas himself is in many ways the most original of all Mr. Walpole's creations. Incidentally the author has in this new volume painted a companion picture to *The Green Mirror*, one of his most popular books.

Novels in great demand

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Edward Shanks: - - TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND 8/6

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Illustrated. 21/-.

[Prices are net.]

Macmillan

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one as no other play of Mr. O'Neill's has had the power to move, for here is ecstasy, not as a doubtful visitor, but as the play's spirit and life-blood. *Ah, Wilderness* is a more conventional piece, but has an inner harmony as strict as that in *Days without End*. It is humorous, delicate and, in its portrayal of the relations between parents and children, of rare imaginative beauty. Here beyond question, is Mr. O'Neill's most important contribution to the contemporary theatre.

hymns from St. Ambrose to St. Francis are assigned to their authors. He makes a good point in his insistence that this is the age in which, side by side, the machine-made thing and the purely decorative work of art are admired – a kind of fulfilment of Wilde's 'all art is quite useless.' It is against that heresy Mr. Gill contends with force and argumentative skill.

ART. By ERIC GILL. Lane. 2s. 6d.

'ALL things made,' writes Mr. Gill, 'are works of art: that is the theme of this book.' Very few great artists have written about æsthetics; (indeed, except Mr. Gill, is there any but Tolstoy and Blake?) and what a great artist writes about his business should be read with respect. Mr. Gill has always denounced the separation between art and craft, and given cogent reasons for his denunciation. This little essay gives in clear and popular form the ideas he has already expressed in numerous essays. There are some points where he is mistaken. He seems at times to share Mr. Heppenstall's tendency to confuse unsigned with deliberately anonymous work; work may be left unsigned because the artist would never imagine his authorship would be forgotten. After all there is not much deliberately anonymous literature – even the great

IN ALL COUNTRIES. By JOHN DOS PASSOS. Constable. 7s. 6d.

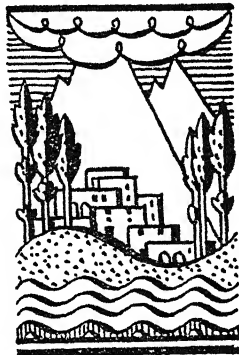
ONE'S COMPANY. By PETER FLEMING. Cape. 8s. 6d.

THOSE who find continued and irrelevant high spirits rather depressing will prefer Mr. dos Passos' travels to Mr. Peter Fleming's. There is a kind of spiritual archness about *One's Company* which is as inhuman as the self-conscious brightness of a Christian scientist: at his best Mr. Fleming reminds us of Francis Burnand, but he employs a modern variety of Burnand's jollity to the most inappropriate subjects. Everything is most frightful fun, and we are all lads together; and really China and its generals are awfully amusing – when the trans-Siberian express crashes, 'it would be difficult to imagine a nicer sort of railway accident'; 'in Mukden everyone was nice'; 'there are two nice things about the foreign communities in China'; a fort is 'nice.' All this shows

Travel

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Poetry

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JOHN MURRAY : LONDON : W : 1

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a very nice spirit in Mr. Fleming; but it makes for a rather uncritical, superficial travel book, in which all appearance of seriousness is carefully avoided. Mr. dos Passos has a philosophy: one may disagree with it, but it is impossible not to respect his passionate love of liberty, his ardent hatred of persecution and oppression. Nor does his extreme radicalism blind him to the faults to be found in radical countries; he has a terrible story about Russian persecution of the bourgeois, and he is no believer in revolution for revolution's sake. He writes about Mexico, Russia, Spain and his own United States. He writes in his own vivid, packed, overcharged style — you not only see Sacco and Vansetti in his account of that tragedy, you can hear them breathing.

Tom Root and his father and various other people. There is perhaps almost too much in the book, and the melodramatic episode of Julian, Saba Reardon and Syd, the clever Jewish architect, is rather harsh in its intrusive violence; but the drama of the two Elizabeths, the lovely and lucky, the loveless and unfortunate, is exquisitely conducted and Mr. Swinnerton's dialogue has a leisurely competence far better than cleverness. Mr. Shanks' long story of 'Tom Florey, the Cornish publican's son, is not so well constructed a book as Mr. Swinnerton's, but it is a most entertaining story: especially good are the chapters recounting Tom's adventures in Germany in a famous poet's house, and the war chapters have the liveliness of Mr. Shanks' war novel about Whitehall, and display far greater humour and maturity.

ELIZABETH. By FRANK SWINNERTON.
Hutchinson. 7s. 6d.

TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND. By EDWARD
SHANKS. Macmillan. 8s. 6d.

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surprised. And so in this play, when the scene-shifters come forward to support the old man fainting, so that he may faint with comfort and dignity, or when the mood of the piece passes from tragedy into extravagant comedy with the completeness of a dream change, or as if the stage and the players' faces were altogether transformed by a different coloured limelight—all is said and done so coolly and decorously that we accept what might be bewildering with interest and pleasure, but without surprise. The author, like the subconscious or whatever is the author of our dreams, has poise and infects us with his assurance.

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